

The Inquirer.

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The Inquirer.

ESTABLISHED 1842.

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SPECIAL NOTICE.

Next week an official Conference Supplement, with the complete Report, will be issued gratis with each copy of 'The Inquirer.'

As 'The Inquirer' will go to press on Thursday morning, all Editorial Matter, Advertisements, and Orders for Extra Copies should be sent as early as possible.

THE SHEFFIELD GATHERING.

OUR readers will naturally look, in the first place this week, to the reports which we submit to them concerning the great event of the year, or, we may perhaps say, of the triennium. They will not expect us to attempt here any argument upon the great subjects—some of them vital subjects—that have been dealt with and suggested at Sheffield. It will be the best service, probably, that we can render, if for the present we confine ourselves to notes of some leading features of this very interesting occasion. In the first place, it has been very successful from the point of numbers, while the organisation of the meetings, thanks to the accumulated experience of the national committee and secretaries, and to the energy and ability of the local committee, has been really admirable. The amplest accommodation has been provided for the conferences, and the hospitality has been full and generous. The Sheffield friends have, indeed, done well, and their success should greatly encourage Unitarians in other districts not quite so large as those where the earlier triennial meetings were held, but still containing a fair nucleus of willing workers and willing entertainers. As in previous instances, the resources of our immediate friends have been supplemented by the kindness of the wider

circle of friends in other churches; and a very hearty meed of thanks is due to such large-minded Christian brethren. The life of our churches is sometimes said to be at a low ebb; but the very large and interested audiences, the genial intercourse of the social functions, and, not least, the many stirring utterances, replete with religious fervour, that have marked the week's history assuredly show no sign of failing vitality, but much the contrary. There have been differences of opinion, of course—we should be a queer lot of people were it otherwise—and, while some of the differences have been expressed, probably more have been felt than were uttered; but the tone has been thoroughly earnest, thoroughly worthy of a community that especially seeks to combine religious fervour with intellectual honesty and clearness. There was, as our readers know, one 'burning question' that was ruled out of discussion, but it made its appearance very decidedly in the PRESIDENT's opening address, and elsewhere with more or less distinctness; and perhaps less harm would have resulted than had been feared from full and open discussion of the subject. We may hope that the very decided pronouncements, made by one speaker after another, in support, not merely of attachment to the name of 'Christian,' but, what is of much more importance, to the life of Christ-like devotion, benevolence, 'joy in the Holy Spirit,' will greatly reassure those who have been afraid lest 'the name that is above every name' were losing its significance for our churches. Certainly no more unequivocal statements of the kind have been made at any representative gathering of Unitarians in recent years. At the same time, we heard no word like imposing a test of any confession of faith as a condition of fellowship such as we have heard of late. Such a Conference, with its deep religious harmony, and its close affinities of fraternal affection, is sufficient evidence that, in order to taste the best fruits of spiritual communion, it is not necessary to erect any form of words into a turnstile at the entrance. Mr. STOPFORD BROOKE's sermon sounded a note which no preacher, at any rate, will easily let slip from his memory; and, if the plaintive cry of one of the laity in the audience on Tuesday evening that it was a 'sermon to preachers' was well founded, there can be no doubt that the effect of that inspiring discourse will be felt among the congregations for many a year.

NATIONAL TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE.

MEETING AT SHEFFIELD.

THE National Conference held its sixth triennial meeting at Sheffield this week. The President, in his opening address, spoke of the meeting as the seventh of the Conference, there having been an interim meeting at Nottingham for a special purpose. In attendance and earnestness the latest Conference will compare well with any of its predecessors, and to the Sheffield organisers and hosts, many of the latter being non-Unitarians, cordial thanks are due. We shall give the list of delegates in our official report of next week; it will suffice to say here that the numbers accepting the invitation to attend were the largest on record.

RECEPTION.

The proceedings began at the Montgomery Hall, where afternoon tea was served to friends assembling, and at four the President, Mr. J. R. BEARD, gave his opening address and welcome to the foreign delegates. There was a large audience, who listened with great attention to the President's remarks, which, as will be seen from the full report given below, dealt largely with the questions raised in connection with the recent action of the South Eastern Advisory Committee.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

The PRESIDENT said :—

IN opening this, the seventh, National Conference of Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Free Christian, Presbyterian, and other Non-subscribing and kindred congregations, I must very briefly acknowledge the great honour done to me by appointing me its President. I am aware that I owe this honour chiefly to the services rendered to the cause of reverent free thought and spiritual religion by my father, the Rev. Dr. Beard, and my brother, the Rev. Dr. Charles Beard, and highly as I appreciate the honourable position in which you have placed me, I thank you still more for the recognition of their unwearied and unselfish labours in the highest interests of humanity. We stand here to-day representing some 400 churches, colleges, and societies bearing various names, having different historical origins, and yet all alike in the liberty which brooks no credal restrictions, no priestly bonds, but gives free access to the workings of the Holy Spirit in the soul of man. We call ourselves severally Unitarians, Liberal Christians, Free Christians, or Presbyterians, but we are all one in this, that we own the authority of neither priest nor creed, neither synod nor council, we inherit or build our churches under no doctrinal trust, and our doors are open to all who may desire to join us in religious communion and worship. And, while we exclude none, we find an all-sufficient bond of union among ourselves in the worship of God our Father and the realisation of the Christian life.

The greatest of our living leaders—he who has been for many years a well-spring of spiritual inspiration to the best minds of the age, whether within or without our churches—Dr. Martineau, at Leeds, said : ‘We are and always have been a fellowship devoted to the worship of God and the service of man in the spirit and faith of Jesus Christ.’ And though there be many who deny us the Christian name and shut us out from common Christian work, they cannot control the spirit of Christ, which leads us to the feet of the Almighty, as for 2000 years it has always lead his humble followers. We do not, it is true, ‘acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as the only begotten son of God, now living and reigning with the Father and Holy Ghost as one God’ ; but neither do we regard him only as a good man taking rank with Socrates, Saky Muni, Confucius, and Epictetus. Dr. Munro Gibson is right in one point of the antithesis which a few weeks ago he put before the Council of Evangelical Free Churches, but not in the other. Christ is to us like all men as far as regards his human nature, but spiritually he ranks so far above all that his nearness to God is more apparent to us than his essential humanity. As was well said in one of our journals a short time ago : ‘His divineness is the highwater mark of the uprising tides of human nature,’ a mark to which none other has ever attained.

But, while affirming the essentially Christian character of the churches represented in this Conference, I think we must admit the truth of Dr. Munro Gibson’s statement as to the importance of the differences between us and those for whom he speaks. We may minimise those differences so far as they mark religious sympathy, but we must emphasise them so far as they mark divine truth. Though for us divergence in doctrinal opinion forms no barrier to religious communion, it is quite otherwise with those who hold a credal religion, and we ought to recognise their different standpoint, and, wishing them God speed in their noble efforts to bring on earth the kingdom of heaven, be content, even in obloquy and exclusion, to maintain our loyalty to what we believe to be divine truth and humbly to work for the same great end.

Somewhat more than enough has been made in this connection of the action of those among us who have recently shown the catholicity of their religious sympathies by admitting to fellowship one who did not, as we do, avow Christ as master, guide and exemplar ; and this has been alleged against them as inconsistent with their Christian profession. Nay, it has been alleged as a proof against the right of all in our churches to call themselves Christians. We, who know these men and know, too, how consonant are their Christian profession and practice, know that it is no such proof. There is a great deal of difference between breadth of religious sympathy and identity of doctrinal conviction. I am one who dissents from the course these gentlemen have taken, and yet it seems to me that it was not that they honoured Christ less, but that they believed in freedom more, than we who differ from them in this matter. Versed in the history of our churches, they had seen, in the stimulating and fructifying light of freedom, a moribund and inoperative faith in Christ renewed in strength and vigour, and become a glowing reality touching the soul with grace, the tongue with fire, the life to Christian achievement. As when planes of gold and iron are bound close together, the nobler metal rises and permeates the baser, so they had confidence in the precious truths and influences of Christianity rising triumphant through the sterner verities of a purely Theistic faith. There is, no doubt, an incongruity between the religious bases of Christian and non-Christian Theists which it may be difficult or impracticable to reconcile. But, though this is not an ecclesiastical court in which our friends may be arraigned and defended, still in view of the false deductions which have been drawn from their action, we may, while each reserving his own individual opinion as to the advisability of their proceedings, recognise that, rightly or wrongly, they are based on principles to which our churches owe their existence, and which command our sympathy and adhesion. It is also common to the con-

stituent churches of this Conference that they look for progressive development in divine truth, for a fuller knowledge, a deeper insight into the nature, laws, and purposes of our Heavenly Father. The history of human thought forbids us to believe that a full and final revelation was once delivered to the saints, and that it is our duty to confine our aspirations within the limits then reached. We see the human mind growing in range and power as the heirs of all the ages reap the rich harvest of past experience and effort. We see the ascent of man from lower to ever higher planes of achievement. We note the enormous advance which has been made since the dawn of history in man’s conception of the Deity ; and we have faith that the future holds for us more, infinitely more, than the past, as mankind becomes more worthy of a fuller revelation.

We cannot all re-echo the words of Lessing : ‘If God should hold out to me in His right hand all truth, and in His left hand the ever active desire to seek truth, though with the condition of perpetual error, I would humbly ask for the contents of the left hand.’ It is the fashion of the day to be fascinated by paradox, but it seems to me that such a choice would be as though one were to prefer an insatiable hunger to a wholesome meal. The spiritual nomad does little to cultivate the garden of God. It is in the assimilation rather than in the pursuit of divine truth that the soul is nurtured. But we confidently hold that every revelation of goodness, truth, and beauty so made our own as to vitalise the current of our existence, every noble ideal realised, every step towards moral and spiritual perfection, forms but a vantage ground from which we may reach still nearer the Almighty, until in the issue of the ages we come within the veil and know even as also we are known.

And this Conference meets in no antagonism to other churches, or to that vast majority of men and women who belong to no church at all. We look for no salvation by virtue of any theological opinion, but for an ever nearer approach to God through humble worship, Christian self-sacrifice, and righteousness of life. But we dare not, therefore, assume to ourselves any superiority over those of our brethren who cling to the formulas, creeds, and ceremonies in which they and their fathers have found aids to faith. We follow that which is to us a better way, without contending that no other can lead to the desired goal. And, while we humbly but steadfastly maintain our own right to the Christian name, and look to Christ as the Revealer and Saviour, we above all things rejoice to know that neither the iron barriers of a stern Calvinism, nor the priestly interdictions of sacerdotalism, nor the intellectual assumptions of a purely ethical culture, nor even the many frailties of human nature, can limit the power of his grace or hinder his spirit from its appointed work in leading his brethren to the loving bosom of his Father and our Father, his God and our God.

It is, then, to such a Conference as I have described it—a Conference reverent, Christian, free, progressive, open on all sides to the inspiration of God, to the breath of human sympathy—it is to such a Conference that I now welcome the foreign delegates.

And, first, I must voice the extreme regret of this Conference at the absence from our meeting of Bishop Ferencz, of Transylvania, the eloquent orator, the beloved pastor, the dignified head of the oldest Unitarian community in the world. Bishop Ferencz writes that nothing could have been more in accordance with the desire of his heart than to have been with us to-day, but having been in infirm health during the whole of the winter, he finds himself unable to undertake so long a journey, which causes him greater regret than he is able to express. We join him cordially in that regret, for it would have been a great privilege to have held communion with one who is no less renowned for his spiritual gifts than for his eloquence and learning. We rejoice, however, to welcome a representative of the Hungarian Church in the Rev. George Boros, who, as a former alumnus of Manchester College, will find many old friends as well as new ones amongst us ; also Mr. E. Urmössy, member of the consistory ;

Mr. Ferencz, son of Bishop Ferencz ; and Mr. Pramatha Lal Sen, representing the Brahmo Somaj of India.

And in welcoming you to this Conference, I would briefly point out to you the extreme fitness of our place of meeting. Sheffield to this extent benefited by our English Black Bartholomew’s Day, that, not being at that time a corporate town, it was one of the few places of any consideration in which the ejected clergy could take up their abode. The vicar of Sheffield at that time, Mr. James Fisher, was one of those sufferers for conscience’ sake, and when he quitted the parish church of this town, he for several years conducted religious worship in secret for the benefit of a number of his parishioners, and was no doubt assisted from time to time by Richard Taylor, Nathaniel Baxter, and Robert Durant, who, like himself, had been ejected from their livings, and resided in Sheffield. In 1678 this congregation began to hold religious services in public, and in 1700 the chapel, where we shall shortly meet, was founded. The trust deed simply dedicates it to ‘the worship and service of Almighty God.’ Since that time the Upper Chapel has been a beneficent and regenerating influence in the town of Sheffield. Its ministers have been conspicuous in furthering educational, social, and political progress. Its people have been among the most useful citizens and the more prominent benefactors of the community. In the pure and stimulating air of freedom, they have faced the dawn and welcomed new light and truth as they rose in sight, until to-day they stand the worthy hosts of a Conference pledged to no theological formulas, no foregone conclusions, but only to the worship of God and the realisation of the Christian ideal.

The Rev. G. Boros, in replying on behalf of the Hungarians, referred in terms of the deepest reverence and affection to Bishop Ferencz, whose regrets at compelled absence he conveyed. He introduced to the audience a son of the bishop, as the ‘Joseph Ferencz of the future.’ He also introduced Mr. Urmössy, another of his Unitarian countrymen. For himself, he regarded England as his second fatherland. It was here that he was born again ; and, among his spiritual fathers, he referred especially to Dr. Martineau, whose full influence on the world was yet to come. Speaking in the name of nearly 70,000 Hungarian Unitarians, he heartily thanked them for their welcome.

Mr. PRAMATHA LAL SEN also briefly returned thanks, and the opening meeting then terminated.

COMMUNION SERVICE.

Between four and five hundred delegates and friends attended the opening service, which, as at previous Conferences, was a communion service. The Rev. Dr. HERFORD conducted, and gave an address full of deep and tender thought, emphasising the bond supplied for all Christians everywhere in the simple rite they were observing. The service was very impressive.

PUBLIC SERVICE.

THE REV. STOFFORD BROOKE’S SERMON.

Following the communion service public worship took place. Owing largely, no doubt, to the celebrity of the preacher announced there was a vast congregation, the members of which had been admitted strictly by ticket till just before the opening. The hymns included a version of Bishop Heber’s ‘Holy, Holy, Holy,’ Mr. Dendy Agate’s ‘O Thou to whom our voices rise,’ and Oliver Wendell Holmes’s ‘Our Father, while our hearts unlearn.’ The musical portion of the service was under the direction of Mr. Stevenson, assisted by a choir from Upperthorpe, and was well done.

The Rev. C. WELLBELOVED conducted the devotional portion.

The Rev. STOFFORD BROOKE, who was also the Conference preacher in 1891, at London, delivered the following sermon, taking for his text the words,—

'The Kingdom of God is within you.'

THERE is one question which occurs to every minister in church and sect, to every interested member of a congregation, to all who, not yet attending public worship, care for the progress of religion. It is this: 'Is there any general statement, even law, which may be laid down with regard to the best way of preaching, and the main subject of preaching?' If that were possible, it would be an equal good for minister and congregation, for those who speak and those who hear, and it would apply to the case of all the teachers and congregations, in every religious body, over the whole world.

The main subject of preaching is the human heart of man, and the human heart of God, and their natural relation of love to one another. All that belongs to love, of man to man, of man to God, of God to man—that is the main subject. And the best way of speaking of it is always to keep close to Nature—to the common, simple, universal outgoings of the very heart of man.

Of course, there would naturally be exceptions to this, or what would seem exceptions. When a crisis in public affairs occurs, such as now meets us in the policy of the Government to Crete, or in the question of education, a crisis which involves the principles of freedom and justice on which our national life is founded, it would be wrong not to speak of it in the pulpit, as the Prophets of Israel spoke. When a crisis in theological thought occurs, or in social movements towards a nobler life for the people, we must speak directly and unmistakably; but even in these crises, we speak chiefly because below the political, economical, or intellectual points concerned there lies in these questions that which impassionates the human heart, which has to do with our love of man and our love of God, the mover of men.

And there are times, also, perhaps every year, when it is wise to preach sermons on matters of doctrine or practice seen from the standpoint of the intellect alone, on matters of theological history or ceremony, academic sermons which tell us how to analyse and formulate our faith, how to wring the laws of religious development out of the history of religion. They are exceptions which the rule allows, provided the rule is obeyed; and they are wisely kept distinct from the sermon, in sets of lectures or courses, because there is a great danger lest the minister and the congregation may come to like them so well that they may cease to care about the emotions of the human heart, or the aspirations of the human soul, and even altogether to ignore that spiritual and ideal life in God which lies beyond the regions alike of the intellect and of the conscience. And then religion decays, and the church where this kind of discourse forms the rule thins away into vanity and emptiness.—As exceptions, then, they are useful, even needful; but the bread and meat, the water and wine, the air and light of the pulpit and the church, from week to week and year to year; that by which minister and people live and move and have their being; by which they grow in power and in unity; by which they ex-

tend their force beyond themselves, and draw the outward world to them—is the continuous preaching of the human heart of men and of the human heart of God, of the doings of human nature which kindle emotion and imagination, and of those deep desires for the invisible and the absolute, in which men most feel their brotherhood to men and their immortal kindred with a God who loves them. The natural feelings in which all men share, and in which we believe God shares, in which even the animals partly share, the universal, common loves and sorrows, joys and aspirations of the impassioned soul, and their working in human life—there is the main region of our work, the foundation, the building, the furniture and the ornament of it.—There is only one day in the week in which this vital business can be done, publicly, by the human heart speaking to other hearts with the force of personality. Why should we use up that day, and shirk its special work, in essays, lectures, discourses, which belong to other realms than the realm where God and the soul embrace, where the heart of man meets with the immense humanity to which it belongs?

The world in which we live is a sorely troubled world, full of woeful sins and their desolate results, torn with sorrows, terrible with inward and silent battles. The men and women who sit below the minister, the minister himself, the million souls who belong to no congregation—if we could but look within upon the world of their hearts, on the labours of their spirit—are, for the most part, tossed in storms of trouble, crying for light and peace, battling desperately against wrong, stretching forth their hands to God, or vainly longing for a sight of Him. And when, on one day in the week, we come, freed from the outward, to hear our brother's voice speak to the inner life, we want to listen to something which touches our own trouble and the vast trouble of the world. We want to hear how we can forget rightly our sins and get rid of them, how God can help us, how we can conquer our sorrows and get their good, how we can love, and how we are loved, and how the inevitable pain of our brothers can be relieved. We want to be told of joy and sympathy and comfort, of the powers of love with us in the fierce warfare which we cannot escape. This is the voiceless cry which goes up Sunday after Sunday from congregated human hearts all over the world. What have we to say to it?

We live in a world of controversy. Day by day, week by week, we are divided into parties that war with one another, denouncing, battering, even hating each other as we contend about political, social, economical, literary, theological, and scientific questions—obscure, unsettled questions of the intellect. The press is filled with this work; our daily life from Sunday to Sunday, our social meetings, are filled with it. Fighting and noise and obscurity and complexity beset us, and it is all but impossible to hear the still voices, or to breathe the air of the fresh infinite, or to touch the quiet of God, or to sit among the mother-thoughts of the universe.

So, wearied, we want on one day, at least, to escape from this; to feel what love and gentleness and tolerance mean; to forget that we are men of a party, and to remember that we are men and brothers; to get into the deep quiet that lies at the heart of things, and to touch what is simple and easy to be understood and childlike to feel;

what belongs to poor and rich, to learned and unlearned, to the child and the old man, to the one universal human heart which flows deep below the surface of life, that surface ruffled so fiercely by the winds of our parties and our problems, crossed so incessantly by the ships which bear our vain and quarrelling and impermanent desires. These are the things we want, as we meet on Sunday—rest and love and peace—no controversy, things for the soul that are simple, things that endure. A voiceless cry goes up for them from the congregated hearts of the world. What have we got to say to it?

We live in a world of steady commonplace. All the week long we are at business, in the midst of money-making, and law, and trade; shut up in material things from morn to afternoon, or drifting in idleness from club to club, from amusement to amusement, tied to the heavy chariots of society. Beyond ourselves, our class, our commerce, speculation, and entertainment, we have, for the time, few thoughts or hopes. All is of the world, of the visible, the transient, and the material. A great deal of our pursuit of knowledge keeps us close to the material, and even our art and literature are often turned into matters of money and success in the world.

Yet he would have a false view of human nature who imagined that this is all that it desires. Below, deep below all this self-interested and outside life, even in those most enslaved by it, the soul aspires. It seeks the perfect, the love and beauty which are eternal, the invisible things of God, the world in which all the vain realities of the earth are as dust and ashes, the hopes and faiths which are unprovable but felt and loved, the creations of the pure imagination which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. In spite of all the tyranny of the material, the soul 'follows the gleam'; the ideal lifts its glittering head above the turbid waters of the real, and claims to be the veritable real.

In nourishing and in kindling this infinite outgoing of the soul is the salvation of persons and societies, of nations, and of the whole world. We want it spoken to and encouraged, at least once a week; we want to hear of things which have nothing to do with money, and business, and fashion, with the course of the world that passes away; we want to touch the life of God, the ideal hopes and desires of the spirit, the eternal love, the ineffable beauty, the righteousness which is never satisfied with itself, the absolute self-forgetfulness.

On one day, at least, let us be drawn upwards into the light which never was on sea or land, into the country where the spirit is at home, and walks, a happy guest, with the great ideas. A voiceless cry for this help goes up from overwhelmed men and women, overwhelmed by the pressure of the material world! What have we to say to it?

To satisfy, even to speak to, these cries is not an easy thing to do. It is ten times easier to write essays on subjects of art, of literature, of history, of sociology, of science, of ethical matters, of theological doctrine; and, indeed, these discourses have their use and place. But the other—to speak home to the soul troubled with temptation, sin, and sorrow; to get down to the simple foundations of the universe, where is quiet, and where love lets us loose from controversy; to find and manifest the ideals which answer to the deepest powers in the hiding places of human nature—this is not

easy ; it is so difficult that it is continually evaded. Nor, indeed, are men prepared for it. The education given in all the schools of the country, in colleges and in universities, takes no note of these things. It is almost wholly intellectual, scientific, and critical. The world-tendency, at the present moment, puts these things of the inner life of the heart and spirit aside, and dwells altogether on that which is to be seen and proved, on the matters which can be analysed by the intellect, and put into successful practice by our capacities for business. It is difficult, in the midst of this, to speak to the wants and passions of the soul in man ; but it is a difficulty which ought to be faced and conquered, and which the whole world, before long, will be grateful to men for having conquered.

As I say, the task is not easy, nor is its preparation. It needs a knowledge of human nature, a knowledge hard to attain ; a knowledge one can scarcely begin to attain till our education is over ; a knowledge which must be pursued with undying eagerness and sympathy all our lives long—and it needs that, day by day, as this knowledge grows, we should take it with us to the throne of God, and bind it up with Him who is the source of human nature, so that we should never think of man, or speak of man, without thinking of God and speaking of God, or never think or speak of God without thinking and speaking of man.

To believe in this way in God, and to try to know the infinite personalities of human nature ; to have enough imagination to see face to face the trouble of humanity ; to love and understand its good, and through its good its evil ; to hear the vast travail of the race working out, through sorrow and sin, through its passions for rest and for the perfect, the new, humanity which is to be ; to penetrate below the surface of life, and there to watch, and help in, the battles of the individual soul ; to feel with all the universal and common passions ; to get down to the parent laws on which the human soul is built, and to which all the amazing variety of human nature can be referred—this is the difficult task of the teacher who would be a power for good in the hands of God ; and he cannot do it by his intellect. It must be done by long trained love and by steady self-forgetfulness, by earnest faith in man as the child of God, and in God as the Father of man.

We learn that knowledge slowly, letter by letter, word by word, but to preach it lovingly as we learn it and to hear it wisely—there is the moving power, the inspiration, the art by which the world is helped, comforted, made alive and joyful, and regenerated ; and when the fire of prophecy is cold, and the impulses which set spiritual mankind forward have lost their spring, when criticism has taken the place of literature, and metrical science the place of poetry, and ethical, intellectual, doctrinal and ritualistic discourses have driven the true sermon from the pulpit,—it is only by a return to Nature, to the heart of man, to the spirit of God in him, to that with which science and criticism and the powers of the intellect have nothing to do, to that which leaves ethics behind and soars into the region of divine love, that the art of prophecy and poetry and preaching will be again made vital, powerful, new and glorious.

I might give from history a hundred instances of such regeneration, but two will be enough. When the art of painting was

dead, or had nothing in it to move itself or the world, one man, the scholar of another who had vaguely begun the work, brought it back to nature. Giotto, full of the passion of humanity, restored his art and set it into centuries of movement, by returning to the simple and vivid representation of the common feelings of the heart. He painted motherhood and childhood and wrote their emotions on the face. He painted the adoration of the soul, the bitter sorrows of loss, the rapture of the spirit rising to God, the simple loves and faiths of human nature. Even when he was most symbolic, he was close to nature. Men read clearly what he meant, and rejoiced in it. They drank again of the ancient springs, they felt the life of the world beating in his pictures. His whole society rose around him in excitement and delight ; and his art became a power of life. Fire was brought to men. As it were out of nothing, a host of new creators rose.

When poetry in England had become critical and didactic, and in it imagination and passion had died, when it only spoke to a cultured class of men, and these only asked of it fine phrases of the critical intellect, how did it once more pour forth fresh waters from the living rock and quench the thirst of the weary pilgrims of eternity ? It went back to sing of the common woes and common love of mankind, of the faith and hopes of common men, of motherhood and sweet-hearting, 'of joy in widest commonality spread,' of all the universal emotions of the human heart. It sang of the simplicities of the flowers and birds, of the clouds and waters of the earth in contact with the heart of man, of the silent influences which flow day by day from the common works of God in the souls of the ignorant and the wise, of the shepherd and the king. The new birth slowly grew—a few poets began it, and touched some of the chords of this living harp of common nature. At last Wordsworth came, and smote, like the desert chief of old, the rock, and poetry was reborn. All the great singing of this century traces its living waters back to him. Poets rose out of the impulse that he gave in a rejoicing host. Again the world was taught to hang upon the breasts of Nature, and to drink the milk of joy ; again it was brought back to the fountain of life, to the everyday heart of man, and its ever fresh outgoings. Again the world was comforted, healed, and inspired ; taught to love, admire, and rejoice. The simple and quiet, the eternal and ideal, were once more made the heritage and the pleasure of mankind.

These two examples are enough. They might be multiplied out of history. Every resurrection of the life of the world has a similar beginning. And, if we wish to renew the religious life of England, to make our preaching and our practice into inspiration—let us return to the natural, to the common doings and wants of the human heart and the longing spirit ; and put the things of mere knowledge, of criticism and analysis, of the barren intellect, into the second place. What have we to do with them when we speak and listen, heart to heart, soul to soul, in the hours of worship ; when we commune face to face with God, with nature, and with humanity ? With other things we have then to do—with those immortal labours and powers of the universal heart of man which link us to all our brothers and our common Father ; which grow not old, interest in which never fails, whose beauty is always new, whose

variety is infinite, whose life kindles life, whose passion has its source in God.

But the subjects contained in this return to the natural and common things are not, it is often said, sufficiently great, or interesting, or beautiful, or enough for a lifetime of teaching. That is the great mistake of the present time. It is that mistake which now makes the work of all the arts so poor, and especially the art of preaching. We have lost the sense that under the universal and common things of human nature, and not in the specialised and the uncommon, the greatest lies, and the loveliest and the most enduring. We have lost the sense that, in those emotions which are common to all men, and not in the working of the educated intellect which is not common to all, that in love and not in knowledge, the noblest and divinest powers lie. We have lost the sense that, not in those ethical doings of conduct which can be prescribed and reckoned up, but in the passionate love of the spirit of man for the perfect—for that which never can be prescribed and never can be reckoned up—the highest glory of man is to be found. Were it otherwise, were the seldom seen the best, and the most rarely met with the most interesting, the world would be indeed misfortuned. Had Nature made the most lovely things the least common, it were not well bred of Nature. On the contrary, God, the master of nature, has been so kind to us that all that we need for the exalting of the spirit, for the fairest emotions of the heart, for all that the imagination can desire for its food—is scattered broadcast, in universal profusion, over outward nature and in the world of the human heart. Infinite beauty, joy and love, are poured out before us, if we will but open our eyes and love. Yes, under the common lies the greatest and the loveliest ; in the daily life of the affections abides what is most interesting and most inspiring.

And the most enduring and the most moving subjects are to be found in the every-day humanities, in the common love of man to man, in the simple joys and sorrows of simple men and women, in the daily self-forgetfulness of mother and child, of wife and husband, in the feeling which we share with the animals, which have lived for countless centuries. Take only that self-sacrifice for the sake of love, which rejoices to be itself in every rank, and knows no caste. It is the outcome of the love we meet even in the animals. It lives among the savages ; it moves in the criminal and the outcast. It rises, through a million varied forms, to its highest form, the sacrifice of a man for the whole world ; always great, even in its lowest shape ; always holding within itself an infinite capacity for development ; always so lovely that it moves the tears and kindles the passion for its imitation in all mankind. Indeed, what is not contained in it which is not most beautiful—all sweet stories of motherhood and of the love of men and women ; all tenderness of friendship, all longing of fatherhood for the life of children ; all devotion of children to their parents ; all courage and fortitude for one another in misfortunes ; all sorrows nobly borne, all joys shared each with each, all patriotism, all the great deaths which have glorified mankind, all seeking and saving of the lost !

This, and things like to it, like in their simplicity of love, like in their commonness, are the never-dying subjects, and in these abide and arise all the great poems, all the great stories, all the great pictures,

all the sweet music, and all the great preaching which have inspired, exalted, and consoled the world. We think them too simple, too common for our work, and it is the worst mistake we make. Our deepest prayer should be to see them, and to feel them, and to make others see and feel them. In them we touch God and man, and in bringing God and man together in them we make religion.—When we come closer, with the same thought, to the spiritual in us, the conclusion is the same. It is not so much the extraordinary states of the soul which are the most interesting, as the most usual. It is not the spirit battling with strange and special trouble which awakens the longest desire to help, the deepest desire to reach the secret of life. It is the soul struggling with the common trials which come to all, following the well-known paths, in touch with the ordinary fates of daily life. Take, for example, but two forms of this.

The young man going into the world, the girl striving within to find room in which to act, to shape herself; God speaking to them both; how they will answer him, what form they will give themselves for the good and help of mankind; what they will be when a few years have gone by; the aspirations they possess, their freshness, their quick hopes and transient despairs; the strife, so silent and self-contained within them; their soul crying out for food, their voiceless prayers, their joyous praise, their wonderful ideals—nothing is more common, yet nothing in the world is more full of undying interest to mankind.

That, however, has the charm of youth; but we call life commonplace in middle age, when its outward forms are fixed. The bloom has gone, the hot afternoon sun takes the shadows away which make various the landscape of life. There is nothing here to interest the preacher or the hearers! Nothing? What of the soul? What, if we look by love into the inward life. It is there, in middle age, that things are often the most wonderful. It is in this common earth to earth life, as it is thought to be, that the terrible trials come; that the battle between good and evil is the hottest; that the sorrows and the loves of life are most profound; that the secrets are deepest, and the loneliness of the soul most uncomfected; that the deadliest ruin is wrought, and the greatest salutations won. You see men and women, grave, sober, dignified, moving, each in their business and their place, in fitness, through society. 'Is this the end,' we say, 'of youth, this still commonplace? What is there to preach of here?' O lift the veil, let the great poet pass by, let the lover of mankind open his lips, let us see with the eyes of God, and lo, there is Hamlet and Othello, Lady Macbeth or Margaret; Zacheus, Nathaniel, the Magdalen and Mary—a mighty world in each of sin or sacrifice, of unfathomed sorrow, thought and joy, of rending passion or quiet endurance. There is nothing commonplace.

Open your heart to love humanity, and you will have a thousand sermons in your experience with which to move the world. Return to nature—there is the secret of all the arts—and especially of the art of preaching.

Lastly, this is the way of all the great regenerators of religion; of the masters of preaching and teaching. When Jesus was in Palestine, and spoke the Word which now moves the world even more than it moved it then, how did he preach? what was his subject? how did he illustrate it?

His subject was the human heart of man and the human heart of God, and he did not go beyond it. And the way in which he spoke of it was a way of simplicity. The wayfaring man could not err from his meaning, for all he said lay within the daily experience of men. And the illustrations he used were drawn from the common things of earth and air which lay before the eyes of all men.

What is God? How shall I know Him? God is a Father, Jesus replied, and loves us as we love our children. Think of all that your heart feels as a father, and then you will know God. Think of all you felt as a child when you loved your father most, and then you will know all you ought to feel for God and all you ought to do.—I have sinned, I have been plunged in sorrow, I doubt my immortal life. Will God forgive, will he console, will he make me alive again?—Look into your own heart of love for the answers. The kingdom of God is within you. What would you do as father or mother? So will God do, only more abundantly,—and we hear, like music across the ages, the parable of the Shepherd and the Prodigal Son. So, by direct appeal to the universal feelings of the heart, Jesus explained the whole relation of God to man and man to God.

How shall I enter the kingdom? This is the subject of a thousand dissertations. Did Jesus discuss? He took a child and set him in the midst. Think of the child, how it feels and loves and trusts; there is the temper of the kingdom—always, always the appeal to the natural! Of what kind is the kingdom, how does it grow, what sort is my union with God, how far must I sacrifice myself? Look at nature! at the growing seed, at the fate of the harvest, at the leaven in the meal, at the union of the vine with the branches, at the sacrifice of the shepherd for the sheep, of friend for friend. The whole of nature and humanity is a parable, of which God and man are the interpretation.

Is morality enough? Can I say, 'If I do this I shall live'? Oh, no! you will only live when you love the perfect Love, and are never satisfied in pursuing it. When you love on earth, can you ever do enough for those you love? What says, that is the human heart? It was to that Jesus appealed, even when he held before us the unreachable ideals, and bid us strive towards them for ever.

And to this kind of teaching, to this simple, universal, quiet, ideal appeal to the love in the heart of man, the soul of man answered as the waters of the great ocean answer to the sun and moon. Spring, after a long winter, came upon the spirit of humanity. A new created world broke into life. Imagination was reborn in religion. Womanhood was re-created for mankind. Fresh waters burst forth from the earth, and fertilised the works of man. The arts found, in his return to nature and to the ideal, the food they needed. Painting, sculpture, poetry recovered in recovering nature. And, foremost in the new life, and doing in the mightiest way the glorious work of bringing inspiration, healing, joy, and peace to every type and class of man, arose into nobility and power, out of this return to the universal heart of man and God, the art of preaching.

WEDNESDAY'S PROCEEDINGS.

THE proceedings were resumed on Wednesday morning with a devotional service, in which the Revs. J. E. Manning, M.A.,

A. Lazenby, and J. Ellis took part. There was a large attendance.

The Conference was opened at 10.30, under the chairmanship of Alderman HARRY RAWSON, J.P., of Manchester, the hall being crowded with delegates and friends.

THE DIAMOND JUBILEE: ADDRESS TO HER MAJESTY.

The CHAIRMAN announced that before proceeding with the ordinary business of the conference, Mr. James R. Beard had a resolution to propose.

Mr. BEARD said that was the first moment when their conference became fully constituted, constituted by the admission of the foreign delegates, constituted by religious worship and communion, and he took that, the first opportunity, of bringing before them a resolution which he was sure would commend itself to their most earnest sympathy and approval. It was present in their minds, he was sure, that they this year saw the completion of the sixtieth year of the most glorious reign of Queen Victoria, and they who represented churches who had always been conspicuous for their loyalty to the Hanoverian succession would not be behind the rest of the country in testifying their loyalty and devotion. As Christian churches they must feel that they owed a special debt of gratitude to Her for a high example, which had not been without its effect in improving the morality of the whole country. The Queen's life had been a golden thread running through the texture of our national history, and they wished that day, most heartily, to express their loyalty to the Throne, their devotion to her person, and their gratitude for the constitutional way in which she had reigned, and for the very deep sympathy which she had shown with all suffering and grief among her subjects. After reading the Address (which we shall publish next week), he said he wished to express his personal agreement with the words of the Address, and his admiration for the eloquent and touching way in which that Address had been drawn up by their esteemed and revered old friend, the Rev. S. A. Steinthal. (Applause.)

Mr. HERBERT BRAMLEY (Town Clerk of Sheffield), in seconding the resolution, said he thought they all admired Her Majesty for her constitutional behaviour, the fact that she knew that Royalty had its duties to carry out quite as much as its privileges, and they all admired the Queen for the strength of her character and her loving heart. He did not think he could add anything more, except that he was delighted to think they would pass this resolution in a city where they hoped, in about six weeks, to see Her Most Gracious Majesty open their new Town Hall. (Applause.)

The resolution was carried, with one dissentient, and a committee was appointed to arrange for the presentation of the Address.

MEANS OF DEEPENING SPIRITUAL LIFE OF OUR CHURCHES.

The CHAIRMAN said the friends were to be congratulated on the happy selection made of the subject which occupied the first and foremost place on the programme of their proceedings. (Hear, hear).

The papers were as follows:

BY THE REV. W. ADDIS.

I ACCEPTED the invitation to read this paper with great reluctance, and now I cannot rid myself of the conviction that I have been rash and over-confident in accepting it at all. This diffidence arises in part from personal defects of which I cannot speak to others. But there are additional reasons which make the subject too

difficult for me. One who speaks on the means of deepening spiritual life within a certain group of societies ought to accept the principles of religion as acknowledged by those, or, at least, by the great mass of those, to whom he speaks, and he ought at the same time to feel sure that these principles afford a sufficient foundation on which men and women can be built up into a spiritual temple in the Lord. I cannot address myself to my task in the strength which such a trust would inspire. I must, therefore, beg your forbearance if I do the best I can and try to describe the means which commend themselves to me, though I have no reason to think that they are likely to obtain general approval here. The remarks which I have to make fall naturally into two divisions. First, I shall say something about that 'law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus,' to which all toil for the spiritual good of others must conform, and next I shall touch upon the outward means which, if not absolutely necessary for the very existence of a Christian congregation, are still calculated to promote its good estate.

What, then, is the first demand which all that is best and highest in those who hear makes upon us who teach? Surely this, that we should deal with the certainties which make for their eternal peace, and not with matters of doubtful disputation. We need not dogmatise or lay down hard and fast rules to preclude a minister from dealing with matters of biblical criticism or church history, or even from discussing that ephemeral literature or those questions of the day which are likely to attract an audience, and which, while they please and interest, are not always calculated to leave them more humble and devout, fitter to fight with sin, and promote the kingdom of God in themselves and others. Our hearers, moreover, are often quite incapable of entering on critical inquiry. They lack the preliminary knowledge, the leisure, and, above all, the trained judgment which are requisite. More than this. But besides that, they desire something higher and better. For they are of like passions with ourselves. They are beset with temptations to mean and unworthy conduct, to worldliness and indifference; they are threatened by the deadly lusts which war against the soul. They experience many a trial and sorrow; they seem to be encompassed with dark and hopeless mystery. Can we find light for ourselves and then declare it to them? Have we any certainty to offer? Yes, unless the New Testament be a delusion from beginning to end. Observe how our blessed Lord began his work. He said that the kingdom of God was at hand, and so far he scarcely advanced beyond the teaching of the Baptist. But he added at once, 'The time is fulfilled; believe in the good news.' He professed that he had come to seek and save that which is lost. He revealed the love of the Father, placed the Fatherhood of God for the first time in the very centre of religion, and gave to the divine Fatherhood a new and deeper sense. The heathen had known of a 'father of gods and men,' who exercised some general superintendence over them, but was very far from realising the ideal of a human, let alone a divine, life. The Hebrew prophets had thought of God as the Father of Israel collectively, and of the king as representing the nation. One of the psalmists had dwelt in pathetic language on God's fatherly pity for those that fear Him, and the allowance which he makes for such poor creatures as men on the ground that we are but dust. So, again, the Greek philosophers had conceived of man as the 'offspring' of that divine and impersonal spirit which is the soul of all things. Christ, on the contrary, regarded divine sonship as a moral quality of which all men are capable, if they desire and ask for and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?' In many ways he explained the divine likeness in which this sonship consists. He said, for example, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.' Instead of making, as the Psalmist did, the fatherhood of God an excuse for weakness on our part, he calls us as sons of God to imitate the Father even in the crowning attribute of divine perfection—the attribute of redeeming love. Thus Christ distinguished clearly between the capacity for divine sonship inherent in man and that actual sonship which belongs to those that are Christ's, and who are filled, in the Apostle's language, with all the fulness of God. Nobody, I suppose, will question the beauty of this picture even if it had no reality. But just because it is a true ideal it is real, is being con-

stantly realised in the life of the individual and of the Church. It was realised first in the historic Christ. He persuades us of its truth by the divine boldness with which he who was meek and humble of heart separates himself from the sinfulness of human nature. He enters on his labour as the Son in whom God is well pleased. He refers to himself in the Synoptic, no less than in St. John's Gospel, not as a son, but as the Son. Nevertheless, he identifies his interests with ours. He asserts that no man cometh unto the Father but by him, implying by the very limitation that he has opened for all a new and living way to the Father. He gives the gracious invitation, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' Not for himself only, but for us men and our salvation he overcame death upon the cross, and by his resurrection brought life and immortality to light. The New Testament from beginning to end testifies to this new life in Christ. 'Thanks be to God,' says St. Paul, 'who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord,' and St. Peter, 'whom having not seen ye love, in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory,' and St. John, 'that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with Jesus Christ His Son.' I humbly believe that this gospel is and will ever be the power of God unto salvation. If we have, very imperfectly, of course, but still really experienced its power, then we can be witnesses for Christ and ambassadors in his name. The religion of the New Testament is one, and the greatest of living critics, Professor Harnack, hits the nail on the head when he begs the unlettered but devout Christian to go on reading the Gospels as he has ever done in the confidence that, after all, the learned critic cannot read it otherwise. The Saviour's life is unique in the power it has to win the hearts of us sinners, to give faith in God as one on whom we may rely, and who says to our souls, 'I am thy salvation.' Christianity, says a saint of modern times, the late Rev. Frederic Maurice, 'is not a doctrine, but a life.' In proportion, then, as we taste of the heavenly gift, and as minister of God impart it to others, in proportion as we forego all party and theological names, and hold only to Christ's words, Christ's life, Christ's cross, Christ's resurrection, Christ's exaltation at the right hand of the Father, Christ's presence with the believer, and especially where two or three are gathered together in His name,—in proportion, I say, as we strive to do all this, we shall, by God's grace, rise and raise others from the death of sin to the life of righteousness.

We must, I think, constantly remember and take care to present the religion of the Bible as a revelation, *i.e.*, as a process through which God, little by little, in many ways and in many portions, but still continuously, unveiled His character and gracious purpose till, at last, He whom no man hath seen at any time, neither can see, declared Himself once and for ever in the person of His only begotten Son. No doubt philosophy can, in some sense, apprehend God as the first cause, the substance which underlies all accidents, the absolute being. Whether philosophy can discover God as a living Person, as one whose eyes are too pure to look upon iniquity, who hears prayer and forgives sin, is, to say the least, doubtful. It is, in any case, certain that philosophy has never led any large body of men to believe in a personal God, much less has it taught them that God is love, or formed a church in which men meet as children, and forget the vain distinctions of rank and wealth and talent and education. Holy Scripture throughout represents God as one who draws near to men, and makes Himself known to them. He revealed Himself to Israel that Israel might be the light of the nations through Him who was born of the seed of Abraham to be the light of His Father's glory and the light of the world. This idea of revelation is the first condition of all religion worthy of the name, nor, so far as practical purposes, need we curiously enquire how far, and in what sense, revelation has been vouchsafed outside the limits of the Jewish and Christian Covenants; whether, *e.g.*, and in what sense, that growth of ethical ideas from Homer to Pindar, and from Pindar to Aeschylus, and from Aeschylus to Sophocles, and from Sophocles to Plato, may be called a revelation. It is the fact of the revelation given in Holy Scripture, and which is complete in Christ, though it never ceases to admit of first application, which concerns us and our people, and which alone is even accessible to most of them.

We ought not to expect the man of business, troubled about many things, to listen on Sundays to theories on the true bearing of evolution, or new attempts to solve the insoluble problem of evil. Many men, however, will listen to the deep and simple revelation of God in Christ. They will be led to faith in God by learning something of Christ's divine life. They will catch the absorbing words as they fall from the lips of Him who, being Himself all holy, yet receiveth sinners, and they will dare to believe that their own sins are forgiven them for His name's sake. They will experience that blessedness which rises above the conditions which Aristotle laid down for earthly happiness, that peace which the world cannot give or take away, that divine strength which is made perfect in weakness. They will enter into the spirit of the Apostle's words—'as sorrowing, yet always rejoicing, as having nothing, yet possessing all things.' In the light cast of Christ's cross, they will be begotten to a new and living hope that all things work together for good. They will receive the triumphs of God's kingdom in the past as their security that one day all things will be put under Christ's feet, and that God will be all and in all.

We need not be afraid that true Christianity will ever degenerate into mysticism. It is true that that danger is a very real one where men have formed Pantheistic conceptions of the divine, or, again, in the reaction from burdensome ritual or asceticism, or among pious Roman Catholics, who are prone to mysticism, partly because it seems to furnish a way of escape from slavery to dogma and ritual, partly because the Church of Rome has forgotten the meaning of faith in the New Testament use of the term, and has made much of that idea of God which, as is supposed, may be revealed by reason, and forms part of a so-called natural religion. True Christianity is incompatible with mysticism, with that contemplative life which Roman Catholics esteem so highly, following herein the teaching of Aristotle, but not the teaching of the New Testament. And, indeed, we may think it our highest privilege to contemplate and adore God's attributes so long as we think of God merely as the first mover or the ocean and abyss of being. It is far different when our eyes are turned to the one perfect vision of God, to God in Christ, to God manifest in the life of Him who went about doing good. The New Testament never speaks of God as abstract being, or at least it never dwells upon that thought. It gives a definition of God which transcends all philosophy, for it tells us that God is love. It binds the service of God to the service of man, connects the two commands of love to God and love to man, which had hitherto stood apart, and assures us that here we have end and aim of all previous revelation. We are to appear each one of us before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and then, as we know, Christ will recognise no devotion save the devotion of a Christ-like mind issuing in Christ-like deeds. In this life of active service we have to lead and then point the way, and the power of Christ's spirit is to supply the motive power of works for the bodies and souls of men, and also to grow in strength the more strength it expends. A church which does nothing for others may be a religious club; it is not, however, a Christian church. It has a name to live and is dead.

Once more, the 'life in Christ' is entirely supernatural. It appeals to men for that very reason. They are weary of their worldly, commonplace views, and Christ buys them back from these at a great price. If a man wants to hold the 'religion of all sensible people,' he need not look for it in the New Testament. There, no doubt, we find heavenly wisdom, but a wisdom which the world counts foolishness. The mystery of God in Christ knows nothing of the metaphysical speculations which have been the bewilderment and delight of theologians.

'For all that, Christ has his hard sayings, though they are of quite another kind. Such are, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," "It is more blessed to give than to receive," "He who loseth his life for my sake and the Gospel's shall find it," "Be not anxious for the morrow," "Except ye be converted and become as little children ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," and many others. Probably, none of us would dare to say that he really and fully believes these great sayings. Only by abidance in the truth and patient waiting for Christ do we obtain some glimpse of their hidden wisdom.'

I can but touch lightly and hurriedly on the second part of my subject, viz., the practical

and outward means by which we can deepen the spiritual life of a Christian church. All that I have to suggest is obvious enough. We should attach the greatest importance to the devotional part of our Sunday services, preparing ourselves for that part of our work by private prayer and the study which will attune our hearts to the solemn words which we utter and endeavouring to believe with our whole heart in the sublime dignity of the office laid upon us—that of leading and guiding the prayers of Christian people. By example and precept we should restore the habit of united and daily family prayer among our people. We have to insist in season and out of season on the necessity of private prayer, if we would labour with fruit either for ourselves or others. We have to remember the imminent peril of teaching others while we ourselves become castaways. We may take it as a sign for good if we are able some time in the week to gather together some of our people for prayer, though I know by sad experience how hard this is. We should supply our people with good books; I do not mean controversial literature, if literature it can be called, but rather such books as the 'Confessions of St. Augustine,' 'Imitation of Christ,' the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' the 'Christian Year,' Robertson's sermons, one or two of Maurice's works, such as his discourses on the Lord's Prayer, or, again, Canon Gore's excellent exposition of the Sermon on the Mount; let us add to these the biographies of good men. Nor can we forget the Bible is the best of all books, and that nothing else will profit us if we neglect that, or fail to read it 'for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the men of God may be perfectly furnished unto all good works.'

Great help also comes from the Sacraments of the Gospel reverently used. I am as far, I hope, as any one can be from the superstition which degrades the Sacraments into mechanical means of grace or magical charms. But how can we value them too highly as signs of Christian fellowship, and not bare signs, but rather 'sure witnesses and effectual signs of grace and God's goodwill towards us by the which He doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken but also strengthen and confirm our faith in Him.' It is no light thing that our little ones should be sprinkled with the water which symbolises the cleansing and hallowing influences of the Christian family and church, should be baptised into the threefold benediction, declared children of God, grafted into Christ's church and bound to remember to their life's end that they have not chosen Christ, but Christ them. How can we realise more easily and sweetly than in the Holy Communion that feeding on the character of Christ in which all Christian privilege and duty is comprised. The Lord's Supper should be also the outward symbol of the church's life, and give us some encouragement in the depressing thought that right to membership is constituted by the payment of a subscription. The Communion also affords the best means, and one not of our devising, by which our young people may bind themselves in allegiance to Christ, and acknowledge unostentatiously but in a most solemn manner their obligation to confess Christ in their daily lives.

When we have got that far it may become easier for the minister and for others to break down the barriers which often make painful separation between man and man, to read and pray with the sick, to meet difficulties, to comfort the mourner, to speak a word in season to him that is weary. Nowhere is delicacy and tact more needed than in pastoral work. There are rocks ahead, dangers of unreality and cant, undue excitement and morbid craving for human sympathy, but also coldness and reserve and the shyness which keeps back the helpful word. Only when the spiritual life is vigorous and true it will not fail to clothe itself in the outward form suitable for its expression.

BY THE REV. JOSEPH WOOD.

I DO not stand here to speak of our churches in a pessimistic mood. On the contrary, I think there is cause for rejoicing in what has been achieved, and greater cause for hope in the new time upon which we are entering. It may suit outsiders who have not particularly clear eyes for appreciating spiritual results to speak of our churches as failures because we have not grown into a powerful organisation, nor crowded our aisles with worshippers. But it would ill become us to measure spiritual effort by material standards. Our churches are yet in their spring-

time, the vegetation is scanty, the fruit is not yet developed; but the green life in the hedges, and the sweet pastures starred with daffodils, and the budding trees, are a prophecy of the coming summer, although to-day the east wind bites shrewdly, and late frosts hold back the full tide of life. Failure, indeed! when on every hand we see the ideas moving on for which we exist. Enough has been achieved to vindicate our enterprise, more than enough to justify our Hallelujahs!

Yet we have to confess that it is not with us as it ought to be. We have not had the success we looked for and had a right to expect. Our progress as churches has been chequered and interrupted. For many of us have been passive, indifferent, apathetic. There has not been about us the victorious movement of a fervent faith. We look back with shame upon periods of dryness, dullness, and deadness. We have scarcely believed that we could be triumphant. We have been too content with holding our own, or with sowing the fruits reaped by others. We have found immense comfort in a modern reading of an ancient text, 'Ye have laboured, and other men have entered into your labours.' Well, for my part, I am not content that other churches should reap all the harvest we have sown. I want our churches to reap also. I am not content to see the cause flourish elsewhere while the martyr churches which gave it birth, and laboured and suffered for it, gather none of the spoils.

Matthew Arnold once reproached us with the sterility of our churches. I am not concerned to inquire how far his reproach was true. But this we all admit, that we do not advance as we could desire. You can scarcely go into a ministerial assembly, large or small, without hearing the question discussed almost *ad nauseam*. Why is it we make so little progress? Various answers to that painful question are given. We are told that it is want of organisation, want of flexibility, imperfect and out-of-date machinery, dull and inartistic services, feeble preaching, a church order that is not democratic enough, a church order that is too democratic, etc., etc. I do not despise these matters. It may be true we sadly need to perfect our organisation, to improve our machinery, to beautify our services, to make our pulpits more attractive, and to systematise our ecclesiastical arrangements; but after all these are not the essence of the matter. A good workman will do more with clumsy tools than a bad workman with the most finished tools in the workshop. Given Faith, Life, Spirit, and the machinery will soon adjust itself to the necessities of the case. If we have to lament times of torpor and small success, let us be faithful with ourselves, and recognise that the cause is first of all in us, in our want of Life, Faith, Spirit. There is a line of one of good old Dr. Watts's hymns which speaks of living 'at this poor dying rate.' I fear it is a too apt description of some of our churches: they live 'at a poor dying rate!' The reason is surely want of inward heat, not faulty machinery; the lack of life, not the lack of organisation. I believe I am speaking the feeling of many hearts when I say that the question of questions for our churches is how to breathe into them the breath of a new life. 'Tis life whereof their nerves are scant; more life and fuller that they want.'

I ask you to consider the condition of our churches in relation to their spiritual life.

If I were to say that there had been any great decay of spiritual life in our churches, or that the type of character presented by our churches in the present day is, taken altogether, not only different in phase but inferior in substance to that which our fathers knew, I should not expect to carry with me the judgment of this Conference. Still less should I expect your assent if I were to assert that the spiritual life of our churches, or the type of character they nourish, suffered by comparison with that of other churches. We have our own dear saints, thank God, who may rank with the fairest, the holiest, the most devoted in the calendar of christendom. I institute no comparisons. I do not say that we are worse than other Christian communities. I only ask, Is our spiritual condition such as we can contemplate without grave solicitude? There is, I joyfully acknowledge, another side to the matter. Many of our churches and missions are conspicuous for their spiritual vitality. The aggregate of saintliness, gifts, and services which they present must awaken our gratitude and admiration. To few of them should we look in vain for individual examples of great moral and spiritual excellence. But, alas! is it not true that in some of them the prevailing spirit is a spirit of slumber? Can we say that they ex-

hibit in anything but a feeble and indecisive way, Faith, Life, Spirit? They live at a poor, dying rate. They are without passion and consistent force. The corporate, collective life beats with a feeble pulse, and we are painfully conscious of cramped enthusiasms and half-hearted beliefs. Is it true that when we cross their threshold we feel that we are breathing a quickened atmosphere, the atmosphere of high appeals and splendid endeavour, and quick, eager sympathy with great causes? Do we feel that we are breathing a finer moral tone and a diviner peace, a more delicate sense of right and a more victorious wrath against wrong than we found outside? Oh, brethren! do not think that I am flinging out censures. I am only suggesting inquiries which are not to be understood or intended for positive affirmations, but only as indicating some of the directions for our consideration. It seems to me that there are certain 'signs' in the condition of our churches which laity and ministers should alike take to heart. And if I address my first set of questions to the laity and my second to the ministers, it is not that they can really be considered apart, but as indicating where the first attempt at improvement must begin.

1. I would ask the laity—Is it not true that there is a growing laxity in attendance at public worship among the members of our congregations? And, further, if this be true, is it not a sign of decaying interest in the things of the spirit and the spirit's life? With the passing away of Sabbath narrowness and superstition have we not often failed to recognise the immense boon, privilege, and advantage of Sunday rest, with its old hallowed, recurring customs of worship? How many of our elders seem to have come to the conclusion that the church services that entered so largely into their youth are no longer useful now that they have acquired wisdom and experience. The preacher can tell them nothing new; they know already what he has to say; there is no benefit for them in these time-worn Sunday usages. They live upright, devoted lives, but they have ceased to brood on the things of the Spirit and to feel the charm and grace of joining in common acts of devotion. They do not consider how far their neglect of public worship may be really a kind of selfishness—how their absence robs the worship of the church of something of its fulness and volume—how by their presence they might swell the tide of sympathy and devotion on which other souls rise to God. They do not consider that deeper, profounder reason for public worship, the need of reverence to any greatness of soul, and the need of reverence to express itself. That public worship in its essence is the soul's admiring homage to Eternal Love and Wisdom; that it is the expressed adoration of absolute Moral Perfection; that it is the soul confessing the glory, the goodness, the beauty, the holiness, the splendour of Immortal Love; that the reverence that does not express itself will soon wither away; that not to render this homage of reverence is to dis honour and belittle the soul—these great and paramount reasons for public worship seem, in many cases, to have passed out of view. I will not stay to argue whether the soul's uttered assent to the mind and judgment, to the goodness and wisdom of God, is not as dew upon the dry ground of spiritual life. There is a nobler reason for public worship than personal edification. It is a necessity for love, admiration, and reverence to seek expression. There is no prayer for personal benefit in that noblest lyric ever sung in heaven or on earth, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.' The note of that hymn of hymns is perfect moral admiration.

But if the great reason for public worship has been lost sight of by our elders, how can we expect it to be appreciated by their children? It is impossible to make the young respect the ordinances of worship if their elders tacitly assert that they have outgrown them. And when, in addition, the rage for athletics, which possesses our age, takes hold of our young people, so that everything else is of less importance and interest, we need not wonder at the spread of Sunday tennis, Sunday boating, Sunday cycling, Sunday billiards, Sunday theatricals. The excuse that the health of the stalwart young men of our well-to-do families is so delicate and precious as to require Sunday for physical recreation is a little too thin. Frances Power Cobbe warned us, years ago, that from neglecting health, sanitation, hygiene and physical development, we were in danger of rushing to the other extreme, and making them a fetish. Certainly we are in danger of thinking, or at least of acting, as if highly-developed

muscles were a means of grace, and bodily vigour not a bad substitute for the spirit of devotion. There are Sunday schools that cycling and football are wrecking, and churches that are smitten with paralysis by reason of week-day pleasures, excitements, games and recreations carried on into Sunday.

2. This leads straight to my second question. Has not the religious training of our young been left too much to chance? Is it not that in many homes, even of cultured people, the children have never had anything like definite religious instruction? Is there not among us an inadequate sense of the Christian parents' responsibilities? We are careful that our sons and daughters shall be thoroughly drilled in mathematics and music, in language and science; we spare no pains to secure for them the best instruction in secular knowledge, while too often we allow them to grow up very poorly furnished in knowledge either of the faith of their fathers or Free Church principles. Are we not too reticent with our children about the things that are nearest and dearest to us? Are we not less shocked that they should be ignorant of the Bible than that they should be ignorant of Homer? Is it not true that there are young people who leave us for other churches simply because they have not been instructed in the distinctive principles of our faith and freedom, have never heard them explained, have never been taught a hearty affection for them. We sadly need for our families and schools a Manual of Free Church principles, and the British and Foreign Association could not do a better work than give us a popular handbook for the enlightenment of our young people. We have a generation growing up among us, not only with a most imperfect acquaintance with the history and principles of our churches, but in still sadder ignorance of the fundamental facts of the religious consciousness, and of the fundamental truths of the Christian Gospel.

3. I have only time to suggest the heads of a third line of inquiry for the laity. Is not the spiritual life of our churches suffering from the growth of a certain secularity of mind, fostered largely by the developments of trade, wealth and material resources which belong to our age; by the all-pervading ambition to better social position; by the multiplicity of amusements, excitements, and social distractions which are found so sweet and seductive; by the contempt with which we have come to regard the simplicities and austeries that once marked our free churches? It is unnecessary to protest that one is not a Puritan in the matter of amusement nor an advocate of the early Quakers' plainness of dress, nor in favour of drawing artificial lines between the church and the world, because one is keenly alive to the danger of our modern luxurious habits and craving for daily excitement. One may rejoice in the richer, freer life of our day, and yet be painfully conscious that simplicity, sincerity, truth, conscience, lofty standards, all suffer from the rage for wealth, the greed for amusement, the excitements, ambition, and interests of a hectic social life. The quiet sanctities of the heart and the home come at last to be too tame for our jaded nerves. The insatiate desire in all classes to gain wealth, to enjoy it, to enjoy it after the fashion of the world—the entirely false estimate of what money can do for human happiness, enfeebles the tone of spiritual life. Consider how the unprecedented facilities for 'rising in the world,' as it is called, which mark the nineteenth century, tend to push into the background, to make vague, shadowy, and dream-like the heavenly realities. In many homes, especially in the middle classes, 'getting on' now takes the place of 'getting up.' How many look for their children's worldly advancement with an ardour which they never display for their spiritual welfare. The overmuch of amusements, the luxuries, the extravagancies, the waste of quickly-acquired wealth which has nothing but scorn for 'plain living and high thinking,'—all these and their like affect our churches, lower their vitality, and slowly leaven with the poison of a worldly mind the whole lump!

I turn to ministers, not as their censor—God forbid—but as a brother in arms, who suggests no weakness of which he is not painfully conscious in his own experience. Brethren, we cannot relieve ourselves from responsibility when considering the spiritual life of our churches. We may not throw the blame upon the laity. This is supremely our affair. Is it our preaching that is at fault? Is it that we fail in adaptedness to the new wants of the new age? Is it that our ministry is lacking in the elements that make for the 'edifying of the church,' 'the

perfecting of the saints,' and the husbandry of spiritual life, into nobler forms and proportions than are usually witnessed?

Let me briefly make these inquiries—

1. Are we not sometimes more concerned about questions and problems than about souls? Are we not apt to put the emphasis of our mission somewhere else than on Men, namely, on Truth. In our zeal for truth, do we not sometimes forget that we are first of all called to be fishers of men? There is a great deal of most praiseworthy earnestness about truth. We are zealous in fighting against errors and superstitions that have disfigured the Gospel and caricatured our Father in heaven; we are moved to the depths of our souls while we contend for a purer and a more verifiable creed. But our earnestness is often, when at white heat, about questions rather than men. Our hearers do not always feel that we are anxious about them, and they feel that, while there is fire of a kind, the preacher's heart is not warm towards them.

Now, we may burn with zeal for a rational faith, and have little concern for souls. To lift the fallen, cheer the faint, give sight to the blind, and healing to the sick, and bread to the hungry, and hope to the despairing, is apt to pass into the second place, while we devote ourselves to what we call truth; by which we mean proving or disproving matters of great importance indeed, but not matters that lay hold on men's hearts and persuade them to mercy, pity, peace and love. Surely we do well to be in earnest, in deadly earnest, in the investigation of truth, and in vindicating its claims on human allegiance; but the injunction that is laid upon us first is to move men to hate iniquity and love goodness, and to translate the truths of which they were never in doubt into life and character.

2. Among the subjects of our preaching, do we place the right emphasis on the great, simple, elevating things that give religion its grandeur and sway? Is not Matthew Arnold's advice to the poet worth remembering by the preacher—'I counsel him to choose for his subjects great actions.' Should not the preacher's subjects have strong moral and religious interest? Should they not have a distinctly personal bearing? Is it not a pity that the precious opportunity should be wasted on petty and minute subjects, or subjects that, however interesting in themselves, are off the track of life's great and serious concerns? It is told of a certain great personage who went one Sunday morning to hear Dean Stanley preach in Westminster Abbey that, on returning, he was asked by a lady friend, 'Well, how did you like the sermon?' 'Oh,' was the reply, 'it was very good; there was nothing to object to; but it was not what I went to hear: I went to hear about the way to heaven, and I only heard about the way to Palestine.' Now, the great Dean might fairly object to the story, if it were regarded as conveying a just impression of his ordinary preaching: but does not the criticism touch one of the defects of a good deal of modern preaching? Questions of historical interest, descriptions of the Holy Land, scientific and ethnographic knowledge, nice points of Biblical criticism, may well adorn the pulpit; but after all, the people want to learn the way to Heaven, rather than the way to Palestine. When the preacher meets his congregation on Sunday morning, he is face to face with a few score souls, whose failures, sins, weaknesses, and dangers appeal to him for help, whose burdens and sorrows want comfort, whose fading vows for good need strengthening. There are only so many minutes given him during which he may minister to their necessities, and he has little time to spare for anything which does not bear directly on their spiritual welfare. Surely his preaching should show that he has been studying them as well as theological problems. Surely his subjects, as a rule, should be those which stir the hearts of men and touch the great duties, the great hopes, the great fears, and the great sorrows of life. Under the influence of a morbid dread of being commonplace, or a juvenile passion for originality, men are in danger of avoiding the great highways of religious thought and human experience, wandering off into little bye-paths, which are pleasant enough, but lead to nowhere in particular. Is it not our wisdom to give the foremost place to those great subjects which, in all ages, have exerted the profoundest influence on the moral and spiritual life of men?

There is immortal strength in these great simple subjects; they nourish the hopes, affections and trusts which are the breath of life to all noble souls.

3. Lastly, I ask, with all deference and diffidence, Does not the spiritual life of our churches suffer because we fail to make enough of our

simple, human, reasonable, natural Christ? In our wholesome repudiation of the supernatural and miraculous Christ, have we not sometimes left out of view the fact which all history emphasises—that humanity needs for its uplifting a human leader, a human example, some Word of God made flesh? Have we not taken too little account of how the imagination and affections twine round a person as they twine round nothing else? A lofty morality and a heavenly ideal are not enough until we see them breathing warm, human breath and living in some brother soul. I believe Emerson to have been for once profoundly mistaken when he said, 'Christianity has dwelt, it dwells, with noxious exaggeration, about the person of Jesus. The soul knows no persons.' And again, 'A true conversion is by the reception of beautiful sentiments.' If beautiful sentiments were enough, Plato's Dialogues ought to have been sufficient for the world's salvation. Men are saved, not by sentiments, however beautiful, but by personal attraction, personal sympathy, personal loyalty, personal example. The soul is drawn to Jesus long before it grasps all his great teaching. If beautiful sentiments will convert the world, we have only to put a volume of Emerson into every man's hand and the thing is done. It is the beautiful sentiment incarnate in a human soul which is the power of God unto salvation. We renounce the great inspiration of religious life for the western world when we drop out Christ from our preaching. That he should be loved and revered, that he who sits enthroned in the gateways of eternity should be followed with all the devotion of personal loyalty, is for the western world to-day, as it has been in the past, the way of progress. Saving power is always in the soul, and lives never in creeds and sentiments. And here let me conclude by quoting the noble words of Mrs. Humphry Ward, who will not be suspected of any undue leanings towards orthodoxy:—'The distrust and weariness of Christianity which is common among some of the best men and women of the present day is the most wasteful, the most uncalled for, surrender of its own wealth that modern life can make. In presence of a system, founded, as every great and victorious religious system must be founded, on perennial needs of human nature, bound up with the hopes and sorrows, the tears, the agonies, the joys, of 1800 years, which has absorbed the Theism of Judea, the ethical thought of Greece, the governing power of Rome, and has added to them an emotion and an enthusiasm all its own, are we to refuse the task of adaptation and reconstruction laid upon us? Is it so little to us that history should once for us Europeans have lifted a human life so high: that in divinising the sufferer of Calvary, our race should have made so vast an effort to set for ever before its wondering eyes the type of truth, purity, and self-forgetting pain?' Brethren, I do not believe that we can afford to dispense with the loyalty, the discipleship, the love, the attractive image which touched and raised our fathers, and which came to us steeped in and consecrated by an unfathomable human experience. To think that beautiful sentiments, or extracts from Vedic hymns, or the Comtist Calendar can ever be a substitute for the sweet old Gospel story—none the less the word of God and the power of God when stripped of miracle, myth and legend—is to shew ourselves strangely ignorant of human nature.

Brethren, forgive me if I have spoken in a tone that seemed too condemnatory. Out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh, and whatsoever I have said has been with one desire only—that our churches should be burdened with the love, subdued with the tenderness, quickened with the vitality, and saturated with the genius of the glorious gospel of the Blessed God!

The discussion was opened by the Rev. JAMES DRUMMOND, M.A., LL.D., D.Litt. He said that this subject they all felt was one of most profound importance, not only to their congregational life, but to every one of them individually. It would be impossible, in a few words, to touch on the various topics brought before them, but he thought he would not be wrong in referring especially to the time-honoured means of promoting the spiritual life which had been justified by the experience of centuries, namely, their meeting together, week by week, for common worship, and to listen to the exhortation of some chosen speaker. How

much devolved upon the minister! How deep his responsibilities, and how apt they were, he was afraid, to fall short of their responsibilities, for two very different reasons. He believed that amongst them there was as profound a spiritual and Christian life as in any body of people on this earth, but amongst their finest characters there had grown up a habit of religious reticence, due partly, he thought, to the too open expression of religious feeling on the part of some others, but due also very largely—he thought generally—to the difficulty of expressing that which most profoundly affected them. He was persuaded in this way their ministers often suffered deep loss, because they were left very largely to guess what was deepest in the hearts of their hearers. They didn't always feel quite sure they would find a response of necessary sympathy; and sometimes the preacher was chilled, and fell back on topics of less interest than those which affected the deepest life of man. This was a temptation to which every preacher was sometimes liable, and it was a temptation to which they were bound to resist. They were bound to seek in earnest and humble prayer that they should believe in their fellow-creatures, and that they should speak in perfect simplicity the deepest and truest things which God might put into their hearts to speak. If they were able to strengthen only one single soul, they would come to their service with increased pleasure, and, through that very pleasure, they would be able to help forward in the spiritual life the hearts of those before them. There were those who did not enter deeply into spiritual life when they came to their places of worship. They loved, to hear more controversial topics, hear themselves exalted above others; and did not enter largely into the deeper things of the spirit. They seemed to think they had outgrown spiritual things; but to have outgrown anything in religion was possible only by acquiring a deeper and more profound spiritual faith (hear, hear). It was possible to dwindle out of spiritual things, but it was not possible to grow out of them. The preacher of the gospel must never lower himself in order to meet this kind of supposed scepticism. He was quite satisfied that deep within the souls of the most sceptical people there was still the spirit of love to be touched; there was still the fire of the faith to be rekindled out of the smoking flax; and unless the preacher possessed some little power—and that power would be given to him if he sought it—then the rekindling of what was best and finest in his fellow-men would be accomplished, or he was not fit for the calling he had adopted. Speaking to those who came to listen to the preacher, he said, if a man was to address them in this lofty tone, with an assured faith, wide sympathy, and tender love, he must have time to seek for those things; and they must not let his life be frittered away in various kinds of external activities, which, however valuable in themselves, were not his peculiar work, and must seriously lower the spirit which he would bring before them when they met together on a Sunday. The true minister asked them to give him time within his study, that he may, with perfect collectedness of mind and devout self-surrender, prepare for his Sunday duties. Then the minister should cultivate the power of speaking lovingly and kindly to their young people (hear, hear). There were many amongst them whose souls were deeply stirred within them, who longed for

sympathy, but did not know where to find it. Let them welcome their young people, and they would, he believed, heartily respond to the appeals made to them, and derive strength for the growing temptations and thickening of the battle of life. In conclusion, the rev. gentleman said the one aim of their churches was to cultivate the love of Christ among mankind, and to raise the hearts of their hearers so that they with Christ might be consecrated to God and become his children (applause).

The Rev. V. D. DAVIS followed, and said the subject under discussion was of the most vital importance to them all. The spiritual life, which they wished to have deepened, was the life for which their churches existed. It was the meaning of the Church that it should cultivate the inward life with God, and strengthen those who were gathered into it; and for the manifestation of that life with God in the world. If there were in their churches a lack of that demonstration of the spirit; if they found that a church did not grow; that there was a defect in its inward life, what ought they do? Let them put themselves in a right attitude before God, and ask him to give them more of his Spirit, and let them strangle every form of self-sufficiency. They had to put out of their hearts every form of jealousy and evil temper. When they were discussing religious questions they had to put from them the bitterness and often bad blood of controversy, and in the management of their churches there were things done and said of the most dreadful irreverent character which were utterly contrary to the spirit of the Church. If only they took into consideration that it was a church of God, for the worship of God, such things would be impossible. It had also been said in the papers, and they all felt in their hearts, that the Church was for worship; they gathered for the worship of God to strengthen in themselves the spirit of prayer. If the preaching in the church did not quicken the spirit of prayer, it was nothing. It was out of the inward spirit that the whole life was spiritualised, sanctified, and made productive of good. Mr. ADDIS had pleaded with them to pay more attention to the vital import of the devout life, the inward life of God, to feel that the devotional part of the service was the breath of its life; to see that in our hearts and in our secret life we had prayer with God, and it was not a strange mystical thing that we were asking and seeking for ourselves, but the natural breath of life. In human fellowship there was the strength of this inward life. It was not in solitude, it was not in the life of the ascetic, or anchorite. The strength of their churches was in human fellowship. It was the spirit which they all understood, which would live and grow if they were true to it. That was the meaning of Christ; that was his power in human life. That was a definite revelation. They had to be true to Christ's spirit which was within them, and it was a spirit which led to prayer. That was the one thing he had to say in respect to this subject. They had to believe in God. They said he was present in their churches, and they had to believe this, and then to learn to pray, and they would not have to trouble about what the world said of them.

The Rev. A. L. SMITH said that, in order to do their work in the world as churches, it was necessary to possess this spiritual life, or rather to be possessed by it.

Mr. JAMES R. BEARD said he wished to give an illustration of the opposite side to

one of the remarks made by Dr. DRUMMOND. That gentleman was very emphatic that we could not expect our ministers to preach to us so as to give their best spiritually unless they were content that they should have leisure and time to prepare themselves in spirit for their addresses. As against that he only wished to say that in his district he knew the three ministers who had, he thought, the most powerful effect spiritually on their congregations of anyone he knew, and these men were also the three hardest workers in philanthropy, in education, and in all other organisations connected in their churches. (Loud applause.)

The Rev. W. BLAZEY read an extract from a letter written to him by Sir James Clarke Lawrence, in which that gentleman said that the deepening of their spiritual life could not be furthered by mere philosophical speculation which, however appreciable by the intellect, failed to touch the heart or conscience which was the chief object of all preaching, or should be so regarded.

The Rev. GEORGE BOROS strongly urged that the churches should not let one of their young men go out into life without confirming them in their religion. Nothing was more important in their religious life than the confirmation of their children and young men. All of them must know the fundamental points of their religion, and he hoped soon to see published a book which would be accepted by all ministers, and from which they might teach young men about to enter life. Another point he would recommend was the carrying religion after their young men, especially those who entered the universities, in some such way as by creating homes for young men in the universities or other high educational institutions.

The Rev. J. E. MANNING also added a few words, advocating a common agreement as to their beliefs.

The Conference then adjourned for luncheon.

The Conference re-assembled at 2.30, under the presidency of HERBERT BRAMLEY, Esq., and again the Hall was filled.

MINISTERIAL SUPERANNUATION.

This was the subject down for discussion, and the CHAIRMAN, in stating the fact, said it was one of great importance to ministers. He did not know, he said, how some of them managed to exist on the stipends eked out to them, and if anything could be done to improve the lot of those who were no longer able to work it should be done. He trusted that something would be suggested, and would result in benefit to their aged and needy ministers.

THE SUPERANNUATION OF MINISTERS.

BY J. COGAN CONWAY, ESQ.

I HAVE been asked to read a paper to-day on the question of the provision of pensions for ministers in their old age, to enable them to retire after a long life spent in active work, when the bodily and mental powers are worn out by constant use.

This is a question which is attracting a great deal of attention at the present day, in most departments of life, and in none is there greater need for its discussion than in that of the ministry of the churches represented in this Conference. I am not indifferent to the higher and nobler considerations which prompt a man to enter that ministry, but like everything else, it has its financial and business side, and regarded from that point of view, it is not a paying profession; there are but few prizes in it, and even these are not very big. As a rule, ours has been accurately described as a frugal ministry. We all of us find that the necessary expenses of daily life have an inevitable tendency to increase, and a Unitarian minister with three boys and two girls is no ex-

ception to the rule. An average minister in our churches finds the struggle to maintain himself and family in decency and comfort hard enough, without sparing anything for provision for old age. Indeed, there is nothing to spare. The latest available statistics I know of relating to the matter are those given by Mr. Rawson in his paper at the Liverpool Conference in 1882, which led to the foundation of the Sustentation Fund. According to these figures, out of 253 returns to enquiries, there were 171 ministerial salaries of under £200 a year, and there were only eighty-two above that figure. We may take it, I think, that things are, for the purposes of the subject under consideration, pretty much the same now, notwithstanding the efforts that have been made to increase salaries by the Augmentation and Sustentation Funds, and I fear there is little prospect, at all events in the immediate future, of an increase in the rate of stipends in the smaller congregations among which the majority of these slender incomes are found. Population has a tendency to gravitate towards large centres; and while it is most important that small country congregations should be maintained, not only for the sake of the spiritual nourishment of their members, but also for the valuable function they discharge as feeders for the larger centres, it would be deceiving ourselves to expect much increase amongst them. The very success of a minister in rousing and stimulating the faculties of the youth of his congregation in a small rural place is likely to strengthen the attraction for the youth of larger towns and a wider scope for their energies and abilities, so that, from a narrow and superficial point of view, the most faithful service may seem to be crowned with the least success. Meanwhile, the minister is expected to maintain a certain position, the claims upon him, independent of his household and personal expenses, are often great, and out of an income of less than £200 a year, it is not possible, even with the greatest economy, to set aside a sum sufficient to furnish provision for retirement when the time shall come when the 'strong hours indignant' have 'work'd their wills,' and the man is left worn out with length of service in the cause of religion. The position of such a man may often well be most painful.

Conscious of fading strength and failing powers, he feels he ought, in justice to himself as well as to his congregation, to relax his efforts and seek retirement, and yet, if he does, he knows not where to look for daily bread. The congregation is too small and poor to be able to afford a pension for him as well as a stipend for a successor, and this consideration may well act as a restraint upon them in expressing any sense of the desirability of retirement which they may feel. If the minister himself has this feeling, you may depend upon it that his congregation shares it. Probably they have been thinking it for a long time; it would occur to them long before it would occur to him; yet what can the congregation do? They feel that they cannot go to their minister and tell him plainly it is time for him to retire, because they know as well as he does that he has no income to retire on; and they do not see, any more than he does, how such an income is to be provided for him. So what do they do? They generally cut the Gordian knot by doing nothing. They absent themselves from the chapel, perhaps, as a gentle kind of hint, and this only makes matters worse. The services become all the duller and tamer in consequence, and the aged minister more depressed and depressing. No one dares to face the facts and ask the minister to retire, because they know that this means to doom him to a life of penury or perhaps of dependence on the charity of his relatives.

That such cases are possible no one can dispute, that they actually happen no one widely conversant with the inner history of our churches will deny; they are not only injurious both to pastors and people, but they are injurious also to the Church at large, to our 'one Church in many places,' for when one member suffers, all the members suffer, and it is not to the credit of the Church, or the group of Churches, of which in many ways we have such good reason to be proud, that they should be possible.

Faithful service for forty years at very moderate remuneration would surely seem to constitute a claim upon the Church at large for provision for declining years. The service has been rendered not merely to the individual congregation or congregations, but to the general cause as well, to the Church as a whole. It is to this the life has been given, and common gratitude dictates that in return the Church should undertake the care of its 'evening gray.'

In the Army, the Navy, and the Civil

Service, the State insists on compulsory retirement at a definite age, on a pension. I do not advocate anything of a compulsory nature, but only that where retirement is desirable on the attainment of a definite age, it should be made possible by the provision of some general system of superannuation, or pension, or retiring allowance.

The need is recognised, and more or less met, in other religious communions. In the Church of England, an incumbent who retires in consequence of age divides the income with his successor. I do not know that this works very well, and certainly it is not a plan that would succeed in our case. Among the Congregationalists there is a Pastors' Retiring Fund, for the purpose of facilitating the retirement of Congregational ministers from the pastorate when no longer able, by reason of age or infirmity, efficiently to discharge its duties, with an invested capital of £135,000 which made grants in 1895 of about £6000 to 160 annuitants. Ministers eligible to receive aid must be accredited pastors of not less than sixty years of age, who have been engaged in the work of the ministry for not less than twenty-five years. The annuity voted to each minister is not to exceed £50, nor raise the entire income of the annuitant above £150, except in special cases with which six-sevenths of the managers present at a General Meeting have power to deal.

There is also an Aged Ministers' Society, founded in 1818, with the object of relieving Protestant Dissenting ministers of the Presbyterian, Independent, and Baptist denominations in England and Wales who have resigned pastoral office through age and infirmity. The income of this society is about £1000, and it makes grants varying in amount from £10 to £15. Our own communion shares in the benefits derived from this Society.

There are also special funds for assisting Congregational Ministers of twenty-five years' standing and over sixty years of age, Pastors' Insurance Aid, and Widows' Fund Societies.

Among the Baptists, there is an Annuity Fund for Retired Ministers and Ministers' Widows and Orphans, raised by voluntary donations and subscriptions of beneficiary members. These last pay annual subscriptions of from £1 1s. to £3 3s., according to age (25 to 60), together with entrance fees of from £3 to £81 from the ages of 46 to 60, but no entrance fee is payable before the age of 46 in order to secure an annuity of £15. A member may secure additional annuities, not to exceed seven in all, at the same rates. Thus, the lowest rate for an annuity of £105 would be £7 7s. a year, if membership is commenced at the age of twenty-five. Or, single payments may be made of from £20 15s. to £92, also according to age. To secure Widows' and Orphans' Benefit the rate is higher. Additions are made to those annuities from the Voluntary Fund contributions. A beneficiary member must have subscribed three years to receive benefit. After that, if he is incapacitated, or retires at sixty-five, he is entitled to his annuity.

Among the Primitive Methodists there are two distinct sources whence superannuation allowances are made—the Itinerant Preachers' Friendly Society, which is conducted on strict business principles, and the Superannuated Preachers' Widows' and Orphans' Fund, which is intended to supplement it. The first is a Benefit Society for members only, and the subscription is £5 10s. per annum, in addition to an entrance fee. The annuities vary, according to the years of membership, from £7 to £30. For widows the annuities vary according to the years of the husband's membership, from £5 to £20. I notice that unsoundness in doctrine is a ground of expulsion from the Society. The other Fund is also for the benefit only of members, but the minimum subscription is small—ten shillings a year. The Fund is supported by voluntary contributions of various kinds, and its grants vary, according to the number of years a minister has 'travelled,' from £8 to £40. A widow's allowance is about half that of a minister.

Among our own churches the principle of superannuation is conceded, and the attempt to meet the need is mainly made by three Societies—the Aged and Infirm Protestant Dissenting Ministers' Society, of which I have spoken, the Widows' Fund, in connection with the Provincial Assembly of Lancashire and Cheshire, and the Ministers' Benevolent Society.

From the first, only three English Presbyterian Ministers receive benefit at present, according to the last report. The Widows' Fund is confined to Lancashire and Cheshire, and is regarded as a

private Benefit Society, no details being made public. Outsiders have an impression that it is a fortunate and flourishing society, but the grounds for this impression are only gossip and conjecture. The Ministers' Benevolent Society, which has its headquarters at Birmingham, was founded in 1852, to afford relief to such Unitarian Christian ministers in Great Britain as from age or infirmity may be prevented from discharging the public duties of their office; and for the aid of the widows and families of any such ministers as may be left without adequate means of support, and extends its operations over the whole country. Its benefits are confined to beneficiary members and their families; to become a beneficiary member a minister must be under forty-five years of age; he must pay an entrance fee of a guinea and an annual subscription of a guinea for twenty years, or one payment of fifteen guineas. No benefit on the ground of age can be received until the member has reached sixty-five, and no one can claim benefit from the society as of right. The grants are made at the discretion of the Board of Directors. The society has an invested capital of £30,000, and an annual income from interest on these investments, together with subscriptions, of about £1600. It made grants, according to the last report, of £1450 to fourteen retired or incapacitated ministers, and twenty-one widows, in amounts varying from £20 to £70.

Thus, leaving aside the Aged Ministers' Society, which at present, as I have said, only assists three of our ministers, we find this state of things: a minister outside Lancashire and Cheshire who is now over forty-five years of age, has no possible chance of securing any pension or superannuation allowance whatever, unless he is already a subscriber to the Ministers' Benevolent Society, and even then, admirable as is the work done by this valuable institution, he has no certainty that he will receive a grant; he cannot claim one as of right, and if he gets one, the average amount of the grant is, roughly speaking, about £40 a year, so that, under the most favourable circumstances, all he can look for on his retirement, unless he has private means, which few of our ministers have, is something less than a pound a week.

Is this right? Is this fulfilling the duty which the Church surely owes to her faithful servants? Does it furnish adequate provision for the support of the declining years of ministers who have earned retirement by long and loyal service?

There can be but one answer, No! Something more is needed which shall at least double these retiring allowances, and something, too, which shall give to faithful ministers at sixty-five years of age, a claim and a right to an annuity, providing they have been contributors to the Fund themselves.

These two points—that the minister should himself subscribe to the Fund during his active years, and that he should have a right to an allowance on his retirement from age or infirmity, provided his ministry has been faithful, should, I think, be integral parts of any scheme that may be devised.

Men over forty-five should be allowed an opportunity of joining, but they should be charged, as in the case of the Baptist Fund, a higher rate.

To secure this no new Fund is necessary. The needless multiplication of Funds is an evil, and there exists already, as I have indicated, an organisation, the Ministers' Benevolent Society, which only requires a slight modification of its laws and a larger measure of pecuniary support from the churches to accomplish all that is desired. All that is really wanted is that the Church at large should realise the need and respond to it, pour out its treasures large and small, the widow's mite no less than the rich man's massive gift. It would be a peculiarly appropriate celebration for our Church to make of the Queen's Long Reign to ensure the comfort of the evening of its prophets' days, to relieve the anxiety that must weigh upon the heart of many a pastor as he thinks of what is to happen when his power of work is past, and to cheer the close of many a laborious career.

I now leave this matter in the hands of the Conference in the conviction that, as the Liverpool Conference led to the establishment of the Sustentation Fund and to increased support of the Rawdon Fund, as the Birmingham Conference dealt with our Literature, and the Leeds Conference with Organisation, so the Sheffield Conference will take up and put on a sound and secure basis this most important question of Ministerial Superannuation.

Mr. DAVID MARTINEAU (London) opened the discussion by remarking that the subject before them had a great charm for him, as he took much interest in the status of their Unitarian ministers. He thought that every man who undertook work for the public ought to be recompensed fairly, decently and respectably, so that he might carry it on without anxiety as to his pecuniary position. Having pointed out the necessity for dealing with the subject from an actuarial point of view, and having shown that the difficulty was not met by merely life insurance, he said it was for the Conference to consider carefully whether they were agreed in thinking that some scheme of superannuation amongst their ministers was desirable. If so, he would like to suggest the appointment of a committee of persons who might be best fitted by experience and personal inclination to examine into this question in all its details, and prepare a report to be submitted to the Conference committee. If the Conference preferred, they might leave the committee to delegate the matter to a sub-committee, who should be men well fitted for that purpose. In turn the committee might bring the whole matter before the Unitarian public in a practical and desirable way.

The Rev. J. C. STREET, of Birmingham, said he had been requested by the Board of Directors of the Ministers' Benevolent Society to attend and make a few suggestions to the Conference. He had feared that the proposal was to establish some new organisation, and form a new and separate fund, but he was glad to gather that this was not the case. As a matter of fact, they had a society which was trying to meet the needs of ministers who had laboured for many years, and were unable to labour any longer. The Ministers' Benevolent Society had a capital of £30,000, which had been contributed mainly by provincial and pious laymen, and was open to membership to any of the ministers in Great Britain, but not to the ministers of Ireland. The fund had been established since 1852, and he would like to correct an impression which seemed to exist in the minds of some friends, that there were ministers who had broken down in health, and who had been members of the fund, who had not been able to secure provision from that fund. As a matter of fact, no minister who was a member of that fund, and whose case was a genuine one, had ever been refused help. Unfortunately, the membership of the Society was not co-extensive with the ministry of the United Kingdom. In the first place, Lancashire and Cheshire had not joined the fund to any extent, because they were already provided for, and in the next place, ministers over 45 years of age were not eligible. Further, there appeared to be among their young ministers a lack of knowledge of the existence of the Society, so that the membership was limited in a greater degree than they deemed it ought to be. Their resources, however, were small, and if their memberships were increased to any extent, they would find the funds lacking. He might say that they did not limit their grants to £20, £30 or even £50. In some special cases their grants had been larger still, and were always and only measured by the resources at their disposal. He would like to point out that the superannuation of ministers was only a small part of the subject with which the Benevolent Fund had to deal. The Society provided

not only grants for aged ministers, but for their widows and children, if they were unfortunate enough to leave any, and they wished to impress on the Conference the necessity of providing, not only a Superannuation Fund, but a fund for making provision for widows and orphans, for the poorly paid minister was often quite unable to make such provision. It seemed to him that a practical suggestion to be made that afternoon would be that they should appoint that day a committee of competent and affluent laymen, along with the directors of the Ministers' Benevolent Society, to see whether it was not practicable to raise the £30,000, which was now the capital sum of that body, to £100,000, in this Jubilee year, and whether along with that, it was not practicable to extend the membership of the Society to all members of all their Free Churches, no matter what their age or subscription might be. He ventured to think that the suggestion was one worthy of that great Conference, and of such a subject. If that sum were raised, they would no longer have the painful details put before them from quarter to quarter when appeals were made from broken down ministers, or their widows and children, left without any provision whatever.

Mr. E. CAPLETON, of London, was desirous of striking a different keynote, and wished to advance three propositions. He wished, first, to point out that the incomes of their ministers, bad as they will be, were not, in comparison with the incomes of the rest of the community, anything out of the ordinary. Secondly, he would say that the number of the rich are too few for them to depend on their contributions for a permanent fund. Thirdly, if they appealed to the widow for her mite and to the rank and file of the churches for their mites, then, inasmuch as there was an equal need for superannuation, there should be an equal benefit; and the best thing their ministers could do was not to attempt to make a class for themselves on this great subject, but join hand in hand with the proletariat and working millions of the country and try to work out a superannuation scheme, and thus bring the charity of the first century into line with that of the nineteenth century, make first century charity into the nineteenth century co-operation. If they waited for the Government to take up this matter, they might have to wait fifty years. This could be done by the churches if they would only realise the possibilities of themselves, joined hand in hand, forming a superannuation fund of their own to which clergy and laity would subscribe, and upon which all should have a claim. The thing might be done and done well. There is sympathy and pity in his soul for poor ministers, but there was also pity for the poor people who went out of their churches and were lost to them because they could not pay their subscriptions. Let them take up this great question and the working classes would feel that their religion was a practical thing.

The Rev. J. M. WHITEMAN (Eastbourne), who was for eight years in the Primitive Methodist ministry, said it was quite true that unsoundness of doctrine was a disqualification for membership; but, although that was so, a member expelled had every penny he had paid to the Superannuation Fund recouped to him with interest. (Hear, hear.) He stated, however, that the increasing subscriptions the ministers had to pay pressed very heavily upon them, especially upon those who were only poorly paid. (Hear,

hear.) Alluding to the best course open to them he said it seemed to him that there must be some subscription incumbent upon all members, and there should be an age limit.

Mr. F. TAYLOR (Bolton) urged the desirability of steps being taken in the way that had been suggested. They were all convinced that the pecuniary position of their ministers was not such as to enable them to make any provision either for sickness or old age. It was most desirable that some committee should be appointed to take this matter into serious consideration, and he moved:—‘That this conference recommends that earnest efforts should be made by congregations and individuals to increase their subscription to the Ministers' Benevolent Society; and that a committee be appointed to confer with the directors of that Society, and take such action in relation to the superannuation of our ministers as they consider desirable; and that the committee consist of Messrs. John Harward, David Martineau, F. Nettlefold, D. Ainsworth, E. Lawrence, M.P., W. Blake Odgers, Q.C., Charles Fenton, and Frank Taylor, and such gentlemen as they may invite to join their number.’

Mr. J. R. BEARD, in seconding the motion, said he thought the names of the committee were such as would give the Conference full assurance that this matter would not be shelved, but would be dealt with in a practical manner. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN, in putting the motion, urged their congregations at once to endeavour to increase the list of their subscribers. The resolution was carried unanimously.

THE BEST MEANS OF RECRUITING OUR MINISTRY.

BY THE REV. J. E. MANNING, M.A.

The Rev. J. E. MANNING, M.A. (Sheffield), read the following paper on ‘The Means of Recruiting our Ministry’:

I AM sure you will all regret, with me, the cause which has put the responsibility of this paper into my hands. Mr. Dowson was to have spoken to you on the best means of recruiting our ministry, and, doubtless, his ripe experience would have enabled him to put the matter before you more completely than I can hope to do. His illness, however, prevented him from preparing his paper, and I must do the best I can. I am sure you will all join with me in wishing Mr. Dowson a speedy recovery.

The question which arose in my thoughts, when the subject was proposed to me, was, ‘Does our ministry stand in urgent need of recruiting?’ One has always got an uneasy feeling that there are more men waiting for pulpits than there are pulpits for them to occupy. With this feeling uppermost, I examined the Essex Hall Year Book for 1897, and I found, if this book is a true criterion, that there are not so many ministers waiting for pulpits as I imagined. During the last ten years, 112 ministers have settled among us, the average supply being thus eleven per annum. There were, at the end of 1896, eleven pulpits vacant. But there were, according to the Year Book, seventeen persons without pulpits, and ready to take charge. I don't know how this compares with former years, and, of course, numbers taken in this way are not a very safe guide; but I presume the supply is somewhat in excess of the demand.

Of these 112 ministers, twenty-six were educated at Manchester College, twenty-five at the Home Missionary College, five at the Home Missionary College and Manchester College, nine at Carmarthen, three at Carmarthen and Manchester College. Twenty-five came to us from other denominations, being converts to

Unitarianism ; nineteen have become ministers from special circumstances, without passing through a theological college ; some from our own denomination, some from other denominations. In addition to these, there are eight lay preachers on the list, being only a small portion of the many lay preachers who do excellent work for our cause.

But, though the supply appears to be somewhat in excess of the demand, the question still remains, 'How are we to get the best men for the ministry?' A church that has a message is always in need of good preachers—men who can speak with power the word God has put into their hearts ; and our Unitarian Church needs now as much as ever—nay, more than ever—men who can preach our gospel with living enthusiasm, and put it convincingly before the world. Though there is a constant supply of recruits for our pulpits, both from our colleges and from the outside, there is also a constant leakage going on. Some of our students, who pass through the whole or part of the college curriculum, never take a pulpit ; some drop out after a few years' ministry, and are never heard of again ; some go to the Established Church (but none, so far as I know, to the ministry of the Orthodox Dissenting Churches, or to the priesthood of the Roman Catholic Church) ; some leave the ministry altogether for other pursuits, having found, in time, that the ministry is not their vocation. In like manner, of those who come to us from other denominations, a certain proportion find in time their home among us uncongenial. Some find us too cold ; others too hot. Some find that we are too restricted, and some that we are too free. They came to us with a pre-conceived ideal, and find they made a mistake. Some certainly do not find the Unitarian Church a Garden of Eden, or its pulpit a bed of roses ; and others are surprised to discover that they have not the liberty, or the license, they expected to enjoy in it. They go ; and occasionally they leave disaster behind them. Our congregations are much to blame in such cases. They elect a minister with the foresight and the wisdom of sheep ; and then they blame the man they elect, rather than themselves for electing him. They knew, practically, nothing about him. They were captivated by his preaching, or by his cheapness. The result is catastrophe, and perhaps the next thing we hear is that the place is closed.

As a set-off to this, of those who have come to us from other denominations some are among our most successful and energetic ministers.

My paper will deal briefly with two special subjects : (1) the kind of men we want for our ministry, and (2) the best means of getting them.

1. It is not easy to define the kind of men we want. A minister, to be all that is expected of him, ought to possess all the virtues and all the accomplishments that adorn humanity. But short of heroic perfection, we want men of good character and of good intellectual ability. We want, also, men who are devoted to the work of the ministry, and we want good preachers.

It is not always possible to predict whether a youth will prove a good preacher. It is astonishing what a few years' training may do for him in this respect. I have known men with apparently very modest abilities in a short time disclose excellent powers as preachers, showing unexpected gifts of extemporaneous speech and extemporaneous prayer ; while some who appeared to have special gifts at first never seem to rise above their early promise. It is for our colleges to refine and polish the raw material, and they ought to pay special attention to training for the work of the pulpit. Some of our students are turned out into the world so learned and so dry, and with so little understanding of the preacher's function, that our congregations cannot endure them. After listening to, or slumbering through, an hour's discourse on some abstruse question of philosophy, which touches them rather more remotely, perhaps, than the North Pole, they are glad to turn to someone else less learned, it may be, but who can preach to them the simple truths of the Gospel of life. I maintain that our colleges, whatever else they do, ought to fit their alumni to be preachers. Our congregations want

preachers, and the art of preaching can be taught.

Apart from this essential qualification, which cannot always be justly estimated in the youth, what other qualifications ought we to look for in him, if he is to be a worthy and efficient minister ?

The youth who will make a good minister is reverent, modest, unselfish, willing to help. He feels that life was not given to him entirely for his own pleasure, but considers himself bound to devote some of his powers and energies for the benefit of others, and for helping mankind. He will give some of his spare time to work in the Sunday-school, in the Mission, in classes for the poor. He is naturally drawn to philanthropic work, and feels himself instinctively impelled to take an interest in whatever has for its aim the ameliorating of human life in its moral, religious, spiritual, and social aspects. He is earnest, hopeful, tender to the weak and the aged ; he is not unwilling to sacrifice self for the necessities of others. The grace of God is with him. All this is not incompatible with abundant animal spirits, a lively sense of humour, and thorough enjoyment of all innocent pleasures. We want men active, bright, intelligent, physically healthy and vigorous. There is hard work in store for any man who is to be at the head of a congregation that is thoroughly alive. We want men who can work, and endure hardness. For there is no minister worth his salt who will not have to fight the good fight of faith.

One excellent means of recruiting our ministry is for ministers, superintendents of Sunday-schools, and organisers of our church life generally, to be on the look out for young men who exhibit qualities indicating a natural fitness, and, if necessary, to encourage them to take up the ministry as their work in life. This would ensure that the candidates for our ministry are known and, to some extent, tried even before they enter college, and would be a guarantee of stability of character and seriousness of intention.

Every minister is consulted by young men who think they have 'a call' to the ministry. Some think they have great gifts and want to shine ; but they have no genuine love of the work, and weary of the drudgery in process of time. Some have the power of slow plodding work, but have not the qualifications, mental or other, that make a useful minister. Some have many admirable gifts but lack patience ; or they have no tact, no common sense. It is only by actual experience of a youth's capacities, by seeing what he can do, and by knowing him in daily life, that anyone, even with deepest insight into character, can judge whether he has qualifications which justify him in becoming a candidate for the ministry.

2. This leads me to my second point—How to get the best men.

I think the desire to enter the ministry usually comes spontaneously, and there is no holier moment in a young man's life than when, with many misgivings of his own fitness, but urged by an impulse he cannot resist, he vows that he will devote himself to the service of God, and of his fellow-men. And unless some such impulse comes to him, he should hesitate long before he is induced to take to the ministry as a profession. Nevertheless, the aid of friends may sometimes be beneficial, and give an impetus to modest hesitancy and doubt. I have consulted a number of ministers of various churches—Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, Independent, Baptist and others—and I find it universally agreed that the initial desire to enter the ministry should come from the youth himself ; but that where special qualifications present themselves, suggestion and direct appeal may be advantageously employed. A youth is sometimes reluctant to express openly his desire, who, with a little sympathetic encouragement, would be found eager to take to the ministry as his proper calling. Why should not parents put it seriously to their sons (of course, I mean in cases where they have seen indications of natural fitness), whether it would not be well for them to think of the ministry as a career in life ? I know that parents have sometimes done so, and have met with no encouragement ; but I know, also, of men who

in after life have expressed regret that when they were young and hesitated through consciousness of deficiency they had no encouragement to put into effect a secret desire. And others I have known, who felt the whole atmosphere of their surroundings totally opposed to any wish of the kind on their part ; who would, moreover, have had to encounter strenuous opposition had they shown any leaning towards the ministry. Worldliness is, unfortunately, as common among Unitarians as among the rest of Christendom. Our young men are encouraged to go into business, or to the law, or to the medical profession, but few are urged to the ministry. There is no doubt they can make larger incomes in any of these spheres than they can in the ministry. And it is quite true that our Unitarian Church has no prizes to offer in the way of rich livings, or of distinguished position. But surely for the highest purposes for which a man can live, the ministry affords a sphere of work second to none ; for no sphere gives greater opportunity for usefulness, and for the devotion of self to the noblest ends. I know of no sphere of life in which the best capacities of a man, intellectual or other, can have a wider field. And as to opportunities for well-doing, they are simply illimitable—or limited only by lack of means to use them. If a minister has business capacity, he will find he can use it to the best purposes in organising the work of his own congregation, or in the wider range of his public duties. All his energy, all his zeal, all his industry, will find ample scope for their display. His work is sometimes disappointing. He feels at times as if all his devotion to the best things is thrown away. But in spite of everything, the ministry has satisfactions which no other sphere of life affords. It is the privilege of the faithful minister of Christ to guide, to cheer, to encourage, uplift, and strengthen ; to bring light to souls that sit in darkness, and new hope to those who have yielded to despair. It is the simple truth, though at times the crushing sense of impotence makes the preacher feel that he is in vain beating the air, that the words of Isaiah are literally fulfilled in him, 'to preach good tidings ; to comfort all that mourn ; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.'

And let me not leave quite unnoticed other advantages which the ministry affords. There are few spheres of life which present more opportunities for a man to follow up any special work he may wish to devote himself to, literature in all its phases, science, or whatever his special taste may be. The minister who knows how to economise his time can find,—even the busiest may find it,—opportunity to gratify his desire, if not to the full, at least to an extent which is impossible in other professions. Would it not be well, if the fathers and mothers of the leading families in our congregations, instead of urging their sons to ambitious views of wealth and position, would quietly lay before them the prospect of the ministry as a career, and when they see indications of the right qualifications, and note the disposition forming, to urge them to join the ranks adorned and glorified by the names of Priestley, Channing, Theophilus Lindsay, Theodore Parker, Yates, Madge, Tayler, Beard, Gaskell, Thom, Sadler (names written in God's Book of Life), not to mention other names, both of the revered dead, and of those still living among us ? Is not the career one which will afford scope for the best capacities of the best we have ? Is it not one to which an earnest youth may feel that he is worthily devoting all his powers, in that he is using them in the most sacred service possible to a human being—the service of God and man ? Our young men have constantly before their eyes the advantages of the secular life, a successful business career, the profits of a lucrative profession. From their earliest years the desirability of such a life is impressed upon them. How seldom are warnings given against selfish ideals, how hesitatingly is the truth enforced that 'a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he posseseth.' Ignatius Loyola won his most devoted disciple, Francis Xavier, who was ambitious, and at first desirous only of worldly fame, by reiterating, with solemn persistency, 'What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but lose his

own soul?' I do not believe that our young people are more deaf than others to the voice of unselfish devotion, nor do I believe that they are devoid of generous impulses. And I feel convinced that if fathers and mothers would put seriously before their boys the intrinsic excellence of the ministerial career as a life of usefulness and helpfulness, wherein all that is best in a man's nature will find ample scope for development, the appeal would not be made in vain. A minister's life is necessarily full of self-denials; but it has also much quiet happiness, and is an unlimited sphere for well-doing.

But, as a correspondent* writes to me, 'The honour and the joy of stately ministering to the Church of Christ would seem to have been awarded, in every age, chiefly to the less favoured as regards outward good—an instance of blessed compensation.' The largest supply of candidates for our ministry will inevitably come from the rank and file of our congregations, from the minister's family, and from workers in the Sunday-school. Here our ministers and superintendents may do much to direct and encourage those in whom they have noticed qualifications that mark them out for the ministerial career. The spirit bloweth where it listeth, and from all ranks of our congregations we must look for men to supply our pulpits. Our congregations, especially in the large towns, consist of every class of the community, and of every condition of culture—working men and manufacturers, professional men, employers of labour, clerks, shopkeepers, merchants—and from the families of this mixed multitude we must look for recruits. There ought to be in all our Churches systematic teaching of the young people in the principles of religion, of morals, in the history of Christianity, and in the history and principles of our own Unitarian Church. Our young people should be taught the meaning of our isolation, and to understand the historical and spiritual basis of their faith in its plainness and simplicity. They ought to be told through what struggles and martyrdoms and heroic faithfulness on the part of the fathers of our Church we hold our present position in the religious world; they ought to be so instructed as to see the golden light of conscience illuminating the whole course of our history. I confess that the results of my own efforts in this direction have not been as encouraging as I could wish; but I have persistently kept up the 'Minister's Class,' however small the numbers that attended it, and I think, nay, I am sure, it has not been without good fruit. By means of a class of this kind, a minister comes into intimate relation with the young people about him, and he is able thus to gauge their powers, intellectual and religious. He will see some who are in every way well fitted to do good work in the ministry; and when this is the case, let him put it affectionately and sympathetically before them. Some will have other views; some will have entire distrust of themselves; and one or two will find in his words the spur they needed. I think, also, a minister may with advantage speak to parents about the ministry as a career for their boys. Some will certainly turn a deaf ear, and some 'will think about it.' But here and there the suggestion will be gladly entertained. Why should not the minister preach occasionally on the good a young man may do in the ministry, and so encourage any latent desire into active determination?

I once heard a sermon preached from the pulpit of St. Mary's Church, Oxford, the design of which was to encourage young men to take orders in the Church. There was a large number of graduates and undergraduates present, and the sermon was upon the Athanasian Creed. The preacher said he understood that the damnable clauses were a stumbling-block to many, and stood in the way of some who would otherwise enter the Church as a profession. This was welcome news to me, as it showed good sense and thoughtfulness on the part of the young men. But the preacher went on to say that the objectionable clauses really meant nothing at all. *Salvus* was nothing more than

'sound' in the faith, and not even the most scrupulously conscientious could object to declare that he who would be sound in the faith must 'thus believe.' Moreover, *absque dubio in eternum peribit*—'without doubt he shall perish everlasting'—meant nothing more than that a man would remain unsound in the faith for ever unless he believed as the Creed enjoined. It was a most delightful piece of special pleading; but I devoutly hoped that, for the sake of his sanity, no young man present would be induced to enter the Church by the preacher's words.

Happily, in our Unitarian Church, we have nothing to explain away in this fashion, for we have no written creed which any youth is compelled to subscribe. All that a minister ought to do in urging the young to enter our ministry is to lay before them the greatness of the work in its religious aspects, the possibility there is of doing good, and the personal blessedness of devoting self to the service of God and man. In the Sunday-school, in the mutual improvement class, in the Bible class, in his own special class, in private conversation, and in the pulpit, the minister may find many opportunities for discovering and encouraging those who are fittest to undertake the work of the ministry.

I find that in some churches the candidates for the ministry have to go through a much more searching process than our young men—not in the collegiate life, for there the process of probation is much the same, but the preliminaries are more elaborate than with us. When a young man has finally made up his mind to join our ministry, he prepares to pass the entrance examination of the College, gets his references, and, if he successfully passes the former, and the latter prove satisfactory, he proceeds, as a matter of course, to the years of academic training. Compare this with the plan followed by candidates for the ministry in the churches, for example, of the Methodist New Connexion. I am indebted for information on the matter to the Rev. Dr. Crothers, Principal of Ranmoor College. He says:—'When a devout and earnest youth shows that he wants to do good, and that he has some qualification for preaching and conducting worship, his name is entered on the "plan" as a preacher on trial for the office, and rule requires that he shall continue on trial for four terms of a quarter of a year each, or as much longer as the Quarterly Meeting of the Circuit may think expedient. At the close of the year he undergoes examination on his religious experience, his knowledge of Christian doctrine, his attachment to the Methodist economy, etc., and, if his statement be satisfactory to the Quarterly Meeting, he is approved as a local preacher fully accredited. If, while discharging his duties as a local preacher, he comes to believe himself to be divinely called to the separate and stated ministry, and his brethren—especially the official brethren of the particular church to which he belongs—are sufficiently in accord with his inward persuasion, his case is submitted to the judgment of several meetings. He must be approved, first, by two-thirds of a meeting composed of the circuit and local preachers of the circuit, and of the stewards and leaders of the church to which he belongs; secondly, he must be approved by a majority of a meeting of the church of which he is a member; thirdly, by two-thirds of a quarterly or special circuit meeting; and, fourthly, by a majority of the district meeting. But the process is not yet ended. He next appears before the college committee, and, if the necessities of the Connexion should require, and his measure of culture and attainment, however acquired, should justify, he is at once received by the Conference on a probation of four years for the regular ministry. Usually, however, after passing the college examination, he is appointed to the college, where he takes a two or three years' course, the third year in college being reckoned as the first year of probation. During probation he is regularly examined, and at its close, if two-thirds of the Conference (composed equally of ministers and lay representatives) are satisfied as to his competence and fitness, he is, to use a familiar phrase, received as "a minister in full connexion."

This method appears to me to have two

special advantages among many—first, for the churches, in that it guarantees that a considerable number of people have personal acquaintance with the candidate, not merely his own immediate friends, but a number of others outside his own circle; and, second, for the candidate himself, in that it secures—what is of considerable importance to him when on the look out for a pulpit—that, on coming out of college, he is already well known. We find, in the case of some of our own excellent students, that they have to wait six, twelve, or more months after leaving college before they get a chance to settle down. Their names are not known beyond the college walls, and when, as is frequently the case, they go abroad for a further period of study, they come back almost perfect strangers. Of course, if a man has anything in him, and has not been ground to very fine dust in the academic mill, he soon makes himself known, and, if he is not too exacting in what he takes at first, he will in due time win his spurs, and be called to a more prominent post.

I don't see any clear remedy in our own case, for we are not so elaborately organised as the Church to which I have referred, whose Connexional system necessitates close organic unity. But there is one thing I may, perhaps, be pardoned for suggesting. It is, that members of the Congregations of the towns in which our colleges are fixed might do something to get to know the students personally. It would be worth their while to invite them sometimes to their houses. Unless a student happens to have friends in the town, he may pass through his collegiate course without ever getting to know, or to be known by, any but his own college set. I remember with pleasure and gratitude the few who made themselves friendly to me in this way in my student days. It was a delightful break in the monotony of my student life. The host got to know the student (raw enough, doubtless), but he or she certainly earned the grateful acknowledgments of the guest.

To sum up what seem to me to be the best practical means of securing suitable men for our ministry:—

(a) Parents may do much, if they will seriously entertain the idea of the ministry as a career for their sons when they see in them signs of fitness for the work. It is a noble profession, and one that will call forth all the best qualities a youth possesses. It is a pity that more of the well-trained youths in our wealthier families do not enter the ministry. There is a great field of usefulness for them, if, remembering that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he possessest, they are willing to devote themselves unselfishly to the unambitious duties of a minister's life. I need hardly point out what advantages a youth who is already fairly well provided for, so far as this world's goods go, has in comparison with one who, with all his desire to be of use in the world, is constantly under the strain of narrow means and a precarious salary.

(b) Ministers may also do much by classes, by sermons, by personal intercourse with their young people to find out those who are fittest, and, when they are found, to direct and encourage them in preparation for their future work. I would emphasise more especially the desirability of impressing upon our young men the purpose for which the Unitarian Church stands, and the circumstances which have brought it to its unique position.

(c) The superintendents and workers in our Sunday-schools can do much by observing those who come under their care, to find out young men who by religious earnestness are naturally fitted for the work, and who, by a proper course of training, may become well-equipped for the ministerial career.

By these means there never need be any lack of recruits for our ministry, recruits who are well known, whose qualities are certified, whose serious intention is unmistakable.

And, now, in conclusion, let me repeat what I said before, that it is vital to our well-being as a Church—vital to the cause for which our Church stands—that we should have a constant supply of well-trained men, who, being devoted to the work, and feeling its sacredness and greatness, shall proclaim to the world un-

* The Rev. T. D. Crothers, D.D.

hesitatingly and clearly the simple Gospel of Christ freed from the doctrinal accretions which time has gathered round it. The Christianity of the self-styled orthodox churches of the present day is like the sea-god Glaucus in Plato's allegory of the soul, who, crushed and marred by the action of the waves, can scarcely be distinguished as the azure-god for the stones and shells and tangled sea-weed which cling to him. So, says Plato, the soul, as we know it here, is crushed and marred by its association with the body and every species of evil.

The allegory may be applied to the prevailing doctrines of the Churches. Around the simple Christianity of Jesus disfiguring accretions have grown, and it is for us to restore once more, and to proclaim to the world, the Gospel as it was proclaimed in all its beauty and simplicity—in all its majesty and strength—to the listening multitudes on the hills of Galilee, or by the lake side. We want youths fired with enthusiasm to preach this holy faith again, and to go forth, like Jeremiah, to preach to men, though the word of the Lord was 'a reproach unto him, and a derision daily,' and though, when thwarted and in despair, he said he would make no further mention of God's name, yet felt His word 'in his heart, as a burning fire shut up in his bones,' and he was weary with forbearing and could not refrain.

The Rev. PHILEMON MOORE, B.A. (Cardigan), in opening the discussion, said he found himself almost entirely in accord with everything that Mr. Manning had said. He thought they might deal with the question under two heads. There was the question of obtaining recruits for the ministry; and there was the question of retaining them when they had got them. Taking the last question first, he pointed out various causes why young men left them, and coming to the second question, he quoted statistics which presented the matter from a different point to that already given. Out of a total of 371 ministers who were included in the Unitarian Year Book, thirty-seven, or 10 per cent., were sons of Unitarian ministers; sixty-five, representing 17.5 per cent., were proselytes who had been educated in orthodox colleges, and sixty-seven, or 18 per cent. of the whole, had no special education for the ministry. That left 202 of the total to be credited to their churches. In conclusion, he said their ministry was chiefly recruited from their smaller towns, whereas, in his judgment, they should come from larger towns, where they had the advantage of connection with large churches, Sunday-schools, and other institutions. (Applause.)

The Rev. HENRY GOW, who followed, referred to the gloomy outlook which the ministry too often held out to those who entered their body. In other professions, after several years spent at college and in foreign travel, the young man was prepared to work hard for a few years in order that he might build up for himself a competence; but in the ministry the labourer was too often haunted with the fear of a poverty-stricken old age and ultimate appeal to the Benevolent Fund. It was the heroic note which was wanting. This alone would call forth the men they wanted to lead them to greater spiritual and religious success.

Mr. A. W. WORTHINGTON, of Stourbridge, contended that the ministers who were to fill their pulpits in the future must come from their body. He urged rich laymen, as in the Church of England, to encourage those of their children whom they thought fitted to enter the church.

The Rev. J. E. ODGERS, of Oxford, urged the formation of an Academic Board in connection with their churches, to take up the charge of the student at an early age, and, if

it was thought desirable, encourage him and support him in a course of study available close to his own home.

The Conference then adjourned.

CONVERSAZIONE.

This very enjoyable function took place on Wednesday evening, being attended by considerably over a thousand persons, including friends from orthodox circles. The assembly took place at the Mappin Art Gallery, Weston Park, the scientific and artistic treasures of which were largely enjoyed, though the musical programme and the delights of social intercourse were the main attractions of the evening. There were no formal speeches, but the guests, after being received by Mr. and Mrs. Michael Hunter and Mr. Herbert Bramley, wandered about at their pleasure, at least as far as the crowded state of the principal halls permitted.

THURSDAY'S MEETINGS.

The devotional meeting, on Thursday morning, was led by the Revs. W. H. Drummond and J. E. Odgers. The latter gave the address, and emphasised the importance of cherishing common prayer, common faith (not common doctrine), and common life.

MISSION WORK.

The morning Conference on this subject was presided over by the Rev. BROOKE HERFORD. He said they gave a good deal of time to the theory of religious life at those meetings. They now would take a little stock of the work of the past three years. It was proposed that morning to deal only with the mission work of their churches, excluding domestic mission work, as that was largely shared by others.

The Rev. DENDY AGATE's address dealt with the work of founding several new congregations in and near Manchester, and he drew attention to the great bazaar to raise funds for the purpose. He said it was a happy omen that that bazaar would be opened on All Souls' Day, for their churches were to be held on open trusts, with no doctrinal bar to church fellowship.

In introducing the Rev. T. B. Broadrick, the CHAIRMAN said they would regret to hear that Mrs. Broadrick—to whom the work in the West owed so much—had met with an accident on the journey.

Mr. BROADRICK, who was received with sympathetic cheers, said the state of their congregations in the West had been anything but satisfactory a few years ago, the business arrangements of the churches being often seriously defective. Things are now much better, and the outlook is decidedly brighter.

Miss H. JOHNSON (Liverpool) gave a very interesting account of Postal Mission work, for which she claimed much usefulness, extending to distant parts of the world. Incidentally she referred to the great value of the literature they possessed, and strongly urged members of our churches to acquaint themselves more with it, and to bring it to the notice of others, especially to teach their truths to the children and young people.

The Rev. T. E. M. EDWARDS reported on the condition of affairs in the south-eastern province, of which he is in charge. After giving details of the efforts made to plant new congregations, he said they had not losses to record, but gains. He specially urged concentrating their strength upon populous places.

The Rev. Dr. GRIFFITHS reported, concerning the work in Wales, where he said there were eight counties 'besides Monmouth'—(laughter)—where there was no Unitarian Church. Considerable propagandist work was going on, but he did not think their duty done unless religious homes were provided for people who in consequence gave up other views.

The Rev. E. W. LUMMIS (West Bromwich) read a report sent by the Rev. John Harrison, superintendent missionary in the Midland district, who was kept away by ill-health. Special interest centred in the lectures given at Stratford-on-Avon, in consequence of the exclusion of a Unitarian teacher by the School Board in that town. Lay-preachers are doing excellently in this district, where a good deal of uphill work is being done.

Mr. J. S. MATHERS (Leeds) read a brief statement as to efforts made in the West Riding. He said orthodox Nonconformity was broadening; hence people showed less readiness to quit their old chapel. If ministers meant what they said as to the value of philanthropy, they must not be surprised if laymen spent so much time and money in support of municipal and political causes. He said some excellent public lectures had been given in the district.

In some supplementary remarks Dr. HERFORD said the principle of reducing the financial grants regularly annually was most excellent, and he illustrated this by reference to Kilburn Church.

The PRESIDENT (Mr. J. R. Beard) said they should try and utilise the strength of scattered sympathisers, such as the Postal Mission had discovered.

Mr. A. W. WORTHINGTON deprecated erecting small chapels in populous districts where contributions could not be large—they should look forward to self-supporting chapels.

The Rev. W. J. DAVIS (Belfast) recommended inviting the people to their churches, extempore preaching, attractive subjects, and the use of the Press.

The Rev. E. W. LUMMIS (West Bromwich) said, as a convert, he had at first felt the hardness of Unitarian congregations. The expression on their faces was not encouraging—(laughter). He thought participation in common mission work would help them all.

Mr. A. W. WORTHINGTON added a few words, and the discussion was brought to a close.

THE EDUCATION QUESTION.

In the afternoon Mr. EDWIN ELLIS presided, and Mr. GROSVENOR TALBOT (Leeds), moved a resolution on the Education Question. He said they came to the subject as a free Conference, seeking the highest educational interest of the children of the land. He gave figures to show that poorer nations than ours afford more for education, and we ought not to be afraid of the cost, despite alarmist statements by supporters of the clerical schools. He was sure the Government Bill would result in the falling away of subscriptions. It really reimposed a church tax. (Hear, hear.) He believed the question of training colleges was of the highest importance. The denominational colleges were chiefly supported by public money and fees, but non-Church teachers were excluded from them. He believed in the future the secular education of the children would be paid for by the State, and the sects would find a way, he

trusted, to supply the religious needs of the scholars.

The Rev. C. J. STREET (Bolton) said this was a very grave subject, above the level of party politics. Incidentally he remarked that those evangelical Nonconformists who denied them the name of Evangelical were glad to have their help in this matter. He quoted figures showing the extent of the injustice in forcing Dissenters' children into Church schools. But he also objected to Board school religion. The conscience clause was no relief as it stands. It might be useful if the religious education were put outside of compulsory hours. He emphasised the last clause of the resolution, especially the closing words.

Mr. HENRY GREG said he believed the Church was responsible for much of the defective education of the country. He quoted from approved School Board regulations to show that 'undenominational' religion does not exist or Unitarians.

Professor CARPENTER objected to the last clause. He would leave the whole body of teachers free to teach the religious views they felt to be true. It would be wrong to deprive the teachers of this precious privilege and duty.

The Rev. GEORGE BOROS (Hungarian) said they could not shut out religion from teaching, but they could exclude dogmas.

Mr. JOHN DENDY (Manchester) especially defended the last clause. He believed the so-called religious education often disgusted the child's mind and burdened the teacher's.

The Rev. C. PEACH (Manchester) proposed to close clause three at 'Denominations.' He said the other denominations were pledged to oppose a secular system ('No, no').

Miss JOHNSON seconded.

The Rev. JOSEPH WOOD (Birmingham) gave a vigorous speech in support of the resolution as moved. He believed that ninety per cent. of the Baptist and Congregationalist ministry and laity were in favour of the secular system. He could not permit the Atheist freedom to teach the children his views. He could not ask it, therefore, for the Unitarian, save at his own expense. He specially urged public representative control as a practical step.

The resolution was then carried by a very large majority, as follows:—

That no immediate legislation as to the Education Question will be satisfactory to the members of this Conference unless it provides (1) that the superintendence of elementary education be everywhere placed under local elected authorities, who shall have control in all schools receiving grants of public money from any source; (2) that in the distribution of public money voted by Parliament for elementary education no preferential treatment be given to the denominational as compared with the Board schools; (3) that training colleges supported by public money shall be freely open to students of all denominations, and that in the opinion of this Conference no settlement of the Education Question can be regarded as satisfactory and final which does not provide that only secular education shall be directly or indirectly paid for out of public funds.

THE CRETAN QUESTION.

The Rev. P. H. WICKSTEED moved the following resolution:—

That in view of the tyranny and persecution to which subject peoples of alien faith are continually exposed under Turkish rule, this Conference of Churches, pledged by long and honourable tradition to the cause of civil and religious liberty all the world over, expresses its sympathy with the Cretan people in their determination to throw off the Ottoman yoke,

and protests against the enforcement of any solution of the Cretan question which does not leave the determination of the destinies of the island in the hands of its own people.

We must give Mr. Wicksteed's impassioned speech next week.

The resolution was seconded by Mr. E. CLEPHAN (Leicester), and the speakers included the Rev. L. P. JACKS (Birmingham) and Mr. J. C. WARREN (Nottingham), who moved an amendment, seconded by the Rev. Dr. GREAVES (Canterbury). The amendment was lost by an overwhelming majority, and the original resolution carried with much enthusiasm. It was resolved to send the the resolution to Lord Salisbury and Sir William Harcourt.

A public meeting was held in Albert Hall in the evening, when addresses were given by Rev. Dr. Herford, S. F. Williams, G. St. Clair, W. Binns, and W. Blake Odgers, Q.C. There was a crowded attendance.

OBITUARY.

THE REV. WILLIAM MITCHELL.

On Saturday last our dear and respected friend, William Mitchell, passed to his rest; after his fourteen years of pain, borne with rare courage and hallowed by devotion to the will of God, he is at peace. It will be a grief to many that, owing to the Sheffield Conference, they were unable to attend the funeral, which took place on Wednesday. In consequence of the same meeting, we are also obliged to defer that full notice of his work and character to which his memory is richly entitled. But as his worn-out remains are quietly laid down, we bow the head in grateful memory of a loving helper, a vigorous thinker, a soul chastened and prepared by long trial for the peace that shall never pass away.

THE REV. JAMES CALLWELL, OF BELFAST.

The Rev. James Callwell died on Sunday, March 21, at his residence, 43, Wellesley-avenue, Belfast. Mr. Callwell received part of his education at the Old Belfast College, and on the completion of his studies became a minister of the Unitarian Church. He was ordained in 1851, and, after having in the meantime had pastoral charge of Limavady congregation, he was ordained in 1855 in Glenarm, where he remained until 1884. In addition to the discharge of his ministerial duties, he there kept a classical and commercial school. Owing to failing health he resigned his work in Larne in 1884, and afterwards preached occasionally in Ballyclare and Templepatrick. He was clerk to the Remonstrant Synod, the moderatorial chair of which he had also been called upon to occupy. By the various congregations named, the members of the Synod, and in a much wider circle, the death of this worthy gentleman, who was seventy-one years of age, will be much regretted. The interment took place on the 23rd, in the old burying ground at Glenarm. Prior to the removal of the coffin a service was conducted in the house by the Rev. Douglas Walmsley, B.A. At Larne, and again at Glenarm, where Mr. Callwell was so well known, the funeral was joined by many of the leading inhabitants. In Glenarm Unitarian Church a service was held, the lessons being read by the Rev. Frederick Thomas (Cairncastle), and the funeral service conducted by the Rev. T. W. Scott (Glenarm), who also delivered an address.

MR. T. MCLELLAND, J.P., BELFAST.

ULSTER has lost one of her grand old men by the death of Mr. Thomas McClelland, J.P., of Mount Alra, Bloomfield, one of the oldest members of the legal profession in Belfast or in the county with which he had been so long closely associated—viz., County Down. For a lengthened period he resided in Belfast, but prior to that he lived and practised in Banbridge. Mr. McClelland belonged to the Unitarian Church, and during the greater part of the time he was in Belfast he was a member of the Second Rosemary-street Congregation. He had been a repealer in Daniel O'Connell's time, and during the Home Rule movement became identified with the Nationalist party and appeared occasionally on their platforms. For many years he held the commission of the peace for Belfast, and, until too feeble health rendered it impossible for him to do so, he attended weekly at the Police Courts. A kindly, amiable gentleman, his death, in his eighty-fifth year, will be widely felt. The funeral took place on Thursday, March 25. The cortège was a long one, and the following, among others, were present:—the Revs. W. J. Davies, Mountpottinger (pastor of the deceased), R. Lyttle, Moneyrea; E. I. Fripp and S. A. Robinson, Belfast; Mr. C. M'Lorinan, J.P.; Dr. Bryce Smith; Mr. M'Cartan, M.P.; Dr. Hyndman, and Dr. Hamilton, president of Queens College.

At Banbridge some of the leading inhabitants joined the funeral just outside the town. The coffin was taken to the First Presbyterian Church (Rev. A. B. Hamilton's). The Rev. W. J. Davies conducted the service, and delivered an address. Mr. Davies said that in Mr. McClelland they were losing a wonderful man in many respects. He had been a faithful and a loving father to his family. He was a just administrator of the law in Belfast, a real friend and defender of the poor, a man of strict integrity and honesty of purpose, so much so that he won in his profession the sobriquet of honest solicitor.—The Rev. Richard Lyttle said there was nothing to regret in the life of the patriarch who had gone from them. He had enjoyed the blessings of a happy life. He had done much more than his share of life's labours and he has passed to his reward with the benedictions of deeds well done upon his hoary head. For more than half a century he was foremost in the battle for public rights and general progress. In the great controversy which for a time rent in twain our Non-subscribing Church he took the side of absolute liberty. He was a man of scholarship and literary attainments. By his great personal and social qualities he inspired that warm affection with which all his friends regarded him.—Prayer was said at the graveside by the Rev. A. B. Hamilton.

THE Obituary of the week includes the names of Johannes Brahms, the great German musical composer; Lord Plunket, Protestant Archbishop of Dublin; and Lady Lascelles, wife of our Ambassador in Berlin.

MRS. ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO makes in this week's *New Age* what seems to us an admirable reply to some criticisms of the Cretan agitation and kindred matters, by J. C. Kenworthy. Pharisaism is a most subtle danger, and it would be most lamentable that the 'English Tolstoys,' of all people, should become suspect.

CORRESPONDENCE.

[The Editor is not responsible for the opinions expressed by correspondents. LETTERS CANNOT BE INSERTED WITHOUT THE WRITER'S NAME; and all private information should be accompanied by the name and address of the sender.]

CRETAN NURSING FUND.

SIR,—Very many of your readers who are sick at heart to think of the work our iron-clads are doing in Crete (and perhaps by the time you print this letter in Greece also) must want to know what they can do besides protesting. Here is one thing to do. Mrs. Ormiston Chant, in response to urgent messages from Greece, is organising a little band of six trained nurses to help in tending the wounded Cretans (or Greeks). The sum of £900 is needed. I have been asked by Mrs. Chant to be one of several to receive subscriptions towards this sum, and I shall be proud to take charge of any funds that may be entrusted to me.

Subscriptions may also be sent direct to the treasurer, Mrs. Annie Barker, 38, Devonshire-place, W.

I shall also be glad to send collecting cards to any of our ministers or others who may apply to me through them; but in view of the objections rightly raised to the carelessness with which this method of raising funds is often conducted I must ask any friends who are good enough to help to make their applications for cards through their ministers or through some other person of standing with whom I have the privilege of being personally acquainted.

PHILIP H. WICKSTEED.

Bix Bottom Farm, Henley-on-Thames.

April 5.

SLY'S IMPROVED PATENT TRUSS.—(44 prize medals, diplomas, and royal appointments awarded.) Experience shows that the old-fashioned steel-spring trusses necessarily press upon and often disease parts of the body before were in a perfectly healthy condition. To those suffering from rupture any invention that gives positive relief is a real blessing. The following valuable testimonial prove the worth of our 'Special Patent Truss.' Sir B. Ward Richardson, the eminent physician, writing to the 'Medical Guardian,' says:—'Sly's truss is one which I should advise patients to try. It is one that is more comfortable to wear, always adapts itself to the every movement of the body, and can be worn with every degree of comfort. It will in all cases be found effectual.' In the following the names are not given for obvious reasons—the originals can be seen on application:—'After wearing your truss for six months the hernia failed to appear on standing up without the Truss, even coughed.—M.D.' 'Your Truss is more curative than any I know.—M.D.' 'Truss answers admirably; is a great improvement on the old patterns.—M.R.C.S.' 'I must congratulate you on your success; your specialite alone will be recommended by me.—M.D.' It was worn and recommended by Sir Andrew Clark (late president of the Royal College of Physicians), and is simple, rapid, and effective. 44 prize medals, diplomas, and royal appointments awarded. Particulars and prices of Sly Bros., Oxford.

THROAT IRRITATION AND COUGH.—Soreness and dryness, tickling and irritation, inducing cough and affecting the voice. For these symptoms use Epps's Glycerine Jujubes. In contact with the glands at the moment they are excited by the act of sucking, the Glycerine in these agreeable confections becomes actively healing. Sold only in tins, 7½d. and 1s. 1½d., labelled, 'JAMES EPPS & CO., LTD., Homeopathic Chemists, London.' Dr. Moore, in his work on 'Nose and Throat Diseases,' says: 'The Glycerine Jujubes prepared by James Epps and Co., are of undoubted service as a curative or palliative agent,' while Dr. Gordon Holmes, Senior Physician to the Municipal Throat and Ear Infirmary, writes: 'After an extended trial, I have found your Glycerine Jujubes of considerable benefit in almost all forms of throat disease.'

NEWS FROM THE CHURCHES.

Great Yarmouth (Appointment).—The Rev. W. Rodger Smyth, who has occupied the pulpit of the 'Old Meeting' during the past five months, has received and accepted an invitation from the congregation to be their minister.

London : Walthamstow.—The Rev. R. Spear has secured a freehold site here for the erection in the first place of an iron church. The site is a corner one, and near the High-street.

Shrewsbury (Appointment).—The Rev. J. C. Street—who has been supplying the pulpit of the High street Church for the past three months—has been unanimously invited to undertake the duties permanently, and has accepted the invitation.

Chelmsford.—The committee have arranged with Mr. E. John Harry, of Penally, South Wales, to conduct the services during the present month, with the hope that a permanent settlement may follow. Mr. Harry was formerly a deacon and active member of the late Rev. Mark Wilks's church in London, and has been long identified with the liberal religious movement in the Congregational body.

OUR CALENDAR.

SUNDAY, APRIL 11.

It is requested that notice of any alteration in the Calendar be sent to the Publisher not later than Thursday afternoon.

Bermondsey, Fort-road, Upper Grange-road, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. HAROLD RYLETT.

Brixton, Unitarian Christian Church, Effra-road, 11 A.M., Rev. H. RAWLINGS, M.A.; and 7 P.M., Rev. W. COPELAND BOWIE.

Croydon, Free Christian Church, Wellesley-rd., West Croydon, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., REV. J. PAGE HOPPS.

Deptford, Church-street, 11.15 A.M., Rev. A.J. MARCHANT; and 6.30 P.M., Rev. T. E. M. EDWARDS.

Essex Church, The Mall, Notting-hill-gate, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. F. K. FREESTON.

Forest Gate, corner of Dunbar-road, Upton-lane, 11 A.M., Mr. J. C. PAIN; and 6.30 P.M., Lieut. DEAR.

Hackney, New Gravel Pit Church, Chatham-place, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. S. FLETCHER WILLIAMS.

Evening Lecture, 'The Law of Liberty.'

Hampstead, Rosslyn-hill Chapel, 11.15 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. BROOKE HERFORD, D.D.

Highgate Hill, Unitarian Christian Church, 11 A.M., Rev. R. SPEARS; and 7 P.M., Rev. W.G. MARSDEN.

Islington, Unity Church, Upper-street, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. G. ST. CLAIR, of Cardiff.

Kentish Town, Free Christian Church, Clarence-road, 11 A.M., 'Spiritual Kingship'; and 7 P.M., 'The Martyrdom of Man,' Rev. A. FARQUHARSON.

Kilburn, Quex-road, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. J. E. STRONGE; Evening, 'Conscience.'

Lewisham, Unitarian Christian Church, High street, 7 P.M., 'Helps to a Higher Life,' Rev. W. CHYNOWETH POPE.

Little Portland-street Chapel, near Oxford-circus, 11.15 A.M., Rev. W. COPELAND BOWIE; and 7 P.M., Rev. S. FARRINGTON.

Mansfield-street Church and Mission, Bethnal Green, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. W. G. CADMAN.

Peckham, Avondale-road, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. G. CARTER.

Richmond, Free Church, Ormond-road, 11.15 A.M., Rev. S. FARRINGTON; and 7 P.M., Rev. H. RAWLINGS, M.A.; 3 P.M., Children's Service.

Stamford-street, Blackfriars-road, 11 A.M., 'How Christianity began outside Palestine'; and, 7 P.M., 'John Wyclif, Socialist and Reformer,' Mr. J. EADS HOW.

Stoke Newington, The Green, 11.15 A.M., Rev. G. BOROS, of Hungary; and 7 P.M., Rev. W. WOODING, B.A.

Wandsworth, Unitarian Christian Church, East-hill, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. W. G. TARRANT, B.A.

Wood Green, Unity Hall, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. DR. MUMMERY.

Woolwich, Masonic Hall, Anglesey-road, Plumstead, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. L. JENKINS JONES.

PROVINCIAL.

BATH, Trim-street Chapel, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. F. W. STANLEY.

BEDFORD, Library (side room), 6.30 P.M., Rev. ROWLAND HILL.

BIRMINGHAM, Church of the Messiah, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. L. P. JACKS, M.A.

BLACKPOOL, Banks-street, North Shore, 10.45 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. WM. BINNS.

BLACKPOOL, Unitarian Lay Church, Masonic Hall, Waterloo-road, South Shore, 6.30 P.M.

BOURNEMOUTH, Unitarian Church, West-hill-road, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. C. C. COE.

BRIGHTON, Christ Church (Free Christian), New-road, North-street, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. A. HOOD.

BUXTON, Hartington-road Church, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. R. COWLEY SMITH.

CANTERBURY, Blackfriars, 11 A.M.

DOVER, Adrian-street, near Market-square, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. S. BURROWS.

EASTBOURNE, Natural History Museum, Lismore-rd., 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. J. M. WHITEMAN.

GUILDFORD, Ward-street Church, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. J. A. FALLOWS, M.A.

HULL, Park-street Church, 10.45 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. H. WOODS PERRIS.

LIVERPOOL, Hope-street Church, 11 A.M., Rev. J. B. LLOYD; and 6.30 P.M., Rev. R. A. ARMSTRONG.

LIVERPOOL, Ancient Chapel of Toxteth, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. J. B. LLOYD.

LIVERPOOL, Renshaw-street Chapel, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. DR. KLEIN. Evening Sermon, 'Reconciliation with God and the Doctrine of the Atonement.'

MANCHESTER, Sale, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. JAMES FORREST, M.A.

MANCHESTER, Strangeways, 10.30 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. ALEX. C. HENDERSON, M.A., B.D.

MANCHESTER, Upper Brook-street Free Church, 10.45 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. C. PEACH.

NEWPORT, I.W., Unitarian Christian Church, High-street, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. W. J. JUPP.

OXFORD, Manchester College, 11.30 A.M., Rev. C. B. UPTON, B.A., B.Sc.

PORTSMOUTH, General Baptist Chapel, St. Thomas-street, 6.45 P.M., Mr. THOMAS BOND.

PORTSMOUTH, High-street Chapel, 11 A.M. and 6.45 P.M., Mr. G. COSENS PRIOR.

RAMSGATE, Assembly Rooms, High-street, 11 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. T. R. SKEMP.

READING, Unitarian Free Church, London-road, 11.15 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. D. DAVIS.

SCARBOROUGH, Westborough, 10.45 A.M. and 7 P.M., Rev. E. L. H. THOMAS.

SOUTHPORT, Portland-street Church, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. B. C. CONSTABLE, of Stockport.

TORQUAY, Unity Hall, Lower Union-street, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. PRIESTLEY PRIME.

TUNBRIDGE WELLS, Mechanics' Institute, Dudley-rd., 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M.

WEYMOUTH, Oddfellows' Hall, Market-street, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Rev. E. C. BENNETT.

YORK, St. Saviourgate Chapel, 11 A.M. and 6.30 P.M., Mr. ALFRED BREWER.

CAPE TOWN, Free Protestant Unitarian Church Hout-street, 6.30 P.M., Rev. D. P. FAURE.

'THE INQUIRER' CALENDAR,

SUNDAY SERVICES are advertised at a charge of 10s. per year, prepaid; a space of two lines being given to each announcement; extra lines are charged 4d. each. Orders can be sent for a portion of the year, not less than thirteen weeks at the same rate. Calendar Notices not prepaid £1 the year. Single Announcements 6d. per line. All information as to change of preachers should reach the Office not later than Thursday.

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S A L E U N I T A R I A N C H A P E L .

The Committee of this Chapel respectfully appeal to the Unitarian public for aid in raising a sufficient fund for the re-construction of their place of worship, which was destroyed by fire on 20th December, 1896.

Chiefly on account of deaths and removals from the district, the congregation has, for some years, been in difficulty, owing to a serious decrease of financial support. Two years ago, however, a successful effort was made to clear off the debt that had thus accumulated. Without outside help, over £250 were subscribed for this purpose; and within the last twelve months the chapel was beautified, and a sum of over £80 raised by means of a sale of work.

Since the settlement of the Rev. JAMES FORREST, M.A., in May last, both the membership and the attendance at the Sunday Services have considerably increased, and the whole prospect become much more hopeful. Our congregational progress, however, has been checked by the burning of our chapel, as our work cannot be efficiently carried on until it is re-constructed. Although the attendance has not appreciably suffered since our enforced meeting in the Old Chapel, the congregation has to endure much inconvenience and discomfort, and all efforts to maintain or improve our position are seriously hampered.

The work of re-building is now being proceeded with; but the cost, including a slight but much needed alteration, will be at least £800 greater than the amount received for insurance. The congregation, notwithstanding the heavy calls lately made upon it, has agreed to raise £250 of this sum, and the British and Foreign Unitarian Association has most generously promised a grant of £50.

In our specially unfortunate circumstances we confidently appeal to our friends throughout the country to help us to the amount required.

Subscriptions will be gratefully received by,
ALBERT NICHOLSON, Hon. Sec.,
The Old Manor House, Sale; or the
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B L A C K L E Y U N I T A R I A N C H A P E L , L A N C A S H I R E .

BICENTENARY CELEBRATION.

£1000 WANTED.

The Congregation appeal to the Unitarian friends in various parts of the country for assistance to enable them to re-build the School, which is in a very poor condition, and unfit for present day requirements.

The Congregation have arranged to hold a Bazaar in the Cheetham-hill Public Hall on April 30 and May 1.

The following donations have been received and acknowledged :—

	£	s.	d.
Members of the Congregation ...	238	0	0
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Charles Eckersley, Esq. (Bazaar Fund)	20	0	0

Donations and goods for the Bazaar will be thankfully received by the following :—

Rev. GEORGE STREET, Chapel-lane, Blackley.
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Preachers: Morning, 10.30, Rev. S. H. STREET, B.A.; Evening, 6.30, Rev. J. W. BISHOP.

Collections will be taken on behalf of the Mission, and the attendance of friends and their liberal support are earnestly invited.

WILFRED HARRIS, Hon. Sec.

UNITARIAN CHURCH, TODMORDEN.

A GRAND BAZAAR and ICE CARNIVAL will be held in the Town Hall, Todmorden, on THURSDAY, FRIDAY and SATURDAY, APRIL 15th, 16th, and 17th, 1897, in aid of the Fund for Enlarging the Sunday-school.

The Bazaar will be opened each day, at 2 p.m. On Thursday by Mrs. F. J. KITSON, Ostlands, Leeds. Chairman, GROSVENOR TALBOT, Esq., Leeds.

On Friday by Mrs. CROMPTON, Rivington Hall. Chairman, THOS. HARWOOD, Esq., Bolton.

On Saturday by Miss E. M. LAWRENCE, London. Chairman, Thos. HOLT, Esq., J.P., Bury.

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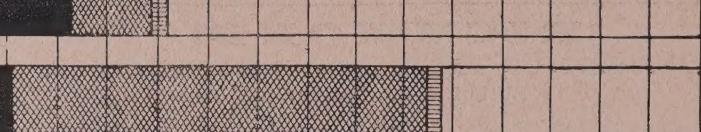
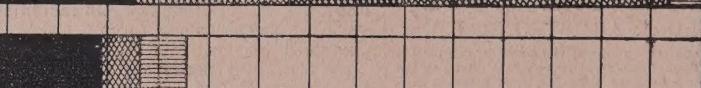
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